

The Influence of Religious-based Programmes on Recidivism of Women Offenders in Kenyan Prisons

Patrick Lumumba Aghan¹, Otieno Marygorety Akinyi², Anne Achieng Assey³

¹ PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology
Social Work and African Women Studies
University of Nairobi
aghanpat@yahoo.com

² Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology
Social Work and African Women Studies
University of Nairobi
cmgakinyi@gmail.com

³ Anne Achieng Assey
Senior Lecturer
School of Open and Distance Learning
University of Nairobi
aaseey@uonbi.ac.ke

Abstract

The study, done between 2021 and 2024, sought to establish the impact of religious-based programmes on the recidivism of repeat female offenders in Kenyan prisons. The study aimed to determine the influence of religious-based programmes on recidivism. The study hypothesised that women repeat offenders' participation in religious-based rehabilitation programmes did not have a positive influence on recidivism trends. It was further hypothesised that participation in religious-based programmes did not prevent women convicts from criminal relapse. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, key informant guides and focus group discussions. Key informants were identified from prison officers who were purposefully selected. Out of a target population of 130 women inmates, a sample size of 48 respondents was selected and participated in the study.

The snowball sampling technique was used to identify the appropriate respondents. Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed and presented in percentages, tables, and verbatim quotes. The study findings established that religious-based rehabilitation programmes had a significant impact on recidivism reduction trends among women repeat offenders. It further shows that participation in religious-based rehabilitation programmes helped repeat offenders desist from criminal relapse and helped to get rid of negative emotions such as depression and anger, enhancing the ability to acquire healthy, stable mental health. It is recommended that religious and spiritual liberty activities be enhanced in all women's correctional facilities to reduce recidivism rates among repeat female offenders since this would play a significant role in helping women convicts acquire emotional, psychological and mental healing, which is vital for their ability to desist from criminal relapse.

Keywords: Homa Bay GoK women prison, recidivism, rehabilitation, religious-based programme, repeat offenders

Introduction

Women, as opposed to men, are increasingly being incarcerated. A study by Moles-López and Añaños (2021) has shown that since the year 2000, there has been an increase in the recidivism rate, which has seen a rapid increase in the female prison population, as compared to the male population, indicating a ratio of 53.3 to 24%. Despite the increase of incarcerated women during the said period, the total number of women inmates is still far lower than compared to that of men. A study conducted by Heimer et al. (2023) among Black, Latina, and American Indigenous women asserts that the increased incarceration trend among repeat women offenders can be attributed to the socio-economic disadvantages faced by women before arrest and subsequent incarceration. To mitigate against the ever-rising rate

of criminal relapse among women offenders, Heimer et al. (2023) observe that many penal institutions and governments have established custodial rehabilitation programmes to help facilitate offender rehabilitation. Such initiatives have promoted religious-based spiritual programmes such as reading sacred texts, prayer, fellowship, worship, communion, baptism services, and discipleship programmes.

Multiple risk factors influence the tendency of offenders to re-offend and return to correctional facilities. Muriuki (2023) argues that the main reason for recidivism is the lack of religious-based programmes, which, in essence, should focus on mainstreaming and addressing the criminal-genic needs of female offenders. The study lists peer pressure, mental stress, prison culture, lack of female gender recreational activities, and drug and substance abuse as other factors that contribute to recidivism. While examining the impact of religious programmes on recidivism trends, Iyobebe (2022) established that the overall impact of the programmes on relapse reduction among incarcerated women offenders remained significantly minimal.

Crawford et al. (2024) attribute continued criminal relapse among women to the failure of penal authorities to equip correctional facilities with requisite facilities that address the needs of female offenders. For example, a limited number of correctional facilities are well-equipped with facilities that can effectively address the needs of breastfeeding mothers and those with mental health challenges. As opposed to the international correctional standards, women offenders in Kenya do not have access to qualified nurses, specialised child clinics or mother-friendly accommodation facilities (Mburu & Okemwa, 2021). Given the foregoing, the current study focuses on interrogating the influence and efficacy of religious-based rehabilitation programmes on recidivism of women repeat offenders (Ondeng et al., 2021).

According to Onyango and Elliott (2023), criminal relapse has not only affected

women's socio-economic well-being but also negatively impacted Kenya's fiscal development. This is because a significant number of incarcerated women are often unable to contribute positively towards the country's economic development. A literature review shows that colossal sums of money are spent annually to sustain repeat offenders nationwide. Among them, women repeat offenders are included (Mbuba, 2023). In response to the ever-increasing challenge of offender relapse, the Government of Kenya (GoK) has continued to adopt dynamic approaches to help strengthen the existing custodial rehabilitation programmes (Savatia, 2021). Despite such efforts, the problem of offender relapse has continued to increase. In Kenya, there is no evidence-based research on the influence of religious-based programmes on recidivism of women repeat offenders. This, according to Onyango et al. (2021), creates the need for research to explore the efficacy of religious-based programmes on the recidivism of women offenders.

In response to the dilemma of recidivism, penal institutions in Kenya have established various correctional programs to reduce offender recidivism (Muriuki, 2023). The most common programmes include religious, vocational, probation, counselling, medical care, and recreational and work programmes. Such programmes target helping offenders change their criminogenic behavioural tendencies and empower them with requisite livelihood skills for community reintegration (Hazra & Aranzazu, 2022). Despite offender participation in such programs, the rate of criminal recidivism has continued to rise, thus overstressing the existing correctional rehabilitation facilities. The trend, therefore, calls for an urgent need to assess the extent to which specific correctional programmes, as advocated by Ondeng et al. (2021), are effective towards criminal recidivism reduction among women.

In the Kenyan correctional context, rehabilitation efforts are faced with a myriad of challenges, which, according to Mburu and Okemwa (2021), include an increase in crime rates, which leads to overcrowding, congestion, poor diet, poor sanitation, infectious diseases,

homosexuality, drug and substance abuse, poor medical care, illiteracy and inadequate supervisory staff in various correctional institutions. Sapp (2023) further explains that the most effective approach to preventing the recurrence of criminal tendencies by offenders in Kenya is adopting a multi-agency institutional strategy that prioritises gender-sensitive rehabilitation strategies. Such an approach would ensure that the deviant behaviour of women offenders is addressed within the context of correctional programming. Studies further show that in Kenya, there are no correctional rehabilitation programmes that are responsive to the criminogenic needs of women offenders (Ondeng et al., 2021). This has been attributed to the continued risk by women to relapsing into criminal activities and engaging in violent crimes such as assault, sex workers, hard drug sellers and locally brewed alcoholic drink hawkers (Ebobo et al., 2024).

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, criminal recidivism has led to increased insecurity in urban communities, overcrowding in correctional facilities and the spread of communicable diseases among incarcerated inmates in many penal institutions (Mburu, 2021). Socially, recidivism tendencies disintegrate the family unit, resulting in high divorce rates among women and men alike. If the situation remains unmitigated, it will likely impede Kenya's socio-economic development. Policymakers and penal institutions experts agree that criminal recidivism should be urgently addressed (Loeffler & Nagin, 2022; Onyango et al., 2021). Empirical studies in Kenya show that offender participation in correctional rehabilitation programmes positively reduces recidivism among female repeat offenders (Ondeng et al., 2021). However, despite offender participation in correctional rehabilitation programmes, recidivism rates have remained relatively high among women offenders. Empirical studies in Kenya conducted between 2015 and 2020 show that correctional facilities are overstretched as a result of overcrowding, with an average offender population of over 54,000 nationwide

(Alila, 2023). This translates to an overpopulation of 55% above the official correctional institutional capacity. Out of this percentage, women constitute a significant number of offenders who, despite their participation in correctional rehabilitation programmes, still find their way back into criminal activities and imprisonment (Onyango et al., 2021).

Understanding the Role of Religious Faith-based Programmes on Recidivism of Women Offenders in Correctional Facilities in Kenya

Studies show that religious-based programmes are vital and instrumental in recidivism reduction among incarcerated women offenders. Kenya's government and penal institutions have prioritised rehabilitating all incarcerated individuals (Ondeng et al., 2021). Proponents of religious-based rehabilitation programmes argue that the programmes positively influence reducing recidivism rates (Maritim, 2018). However, other studies, such as Pretorius (2018), argue to the contrary, stating that participation in religious faith-based rehabilitation programmes does not have a positive effect on recidivism reduction. A study by Johnson (2021) shows that offenders who utilise and participate in religious faith-based programmes tend to adjust psychologically to life in correctional facilities. The communal nature of such programmes provides offenders with a social and supportive network for a change of attitude towards crime and deviant behaviour. According to Smith et al. (2024), when offenders are exposed to cognitive behavioural therapy, they acquire skills that can transform their criminogenic attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and thoughts. The finding of the latter study is incongruent with the findings of Hallett et al. (2019), who established that inmates who often participate in religious faith-based programmes are more likely to develop a tendency to acquire positive attitudes, thus enabling them to acquire law-abiding behavioural patterns.

Kiemo (2022) posits that participation in religious faith-based programmes positively affects recidivism reduction amongst offenders. Osina and Omboto (2024) corroborate Kiemo's (2022) study findings by asserting a positive correlation between participation in

religious-based programmes and recidivism reduction. However, the mentioned studies failed to examine the influence of specific religious-based spiritual programmes on the recidivism tendency of women offenders. While other studies indicate varied findings on the impact of religious correctional programmes on recidivism reduction, Johnson (2021) asserts that successful participation in such services is more likely to result in a reduction of delinquency and criminal behavioural tendencies. On the contrary, Bumphus's (2023) study posits that only a limited number of religious-based correctional programme activities correspond directly with a positive outcome of recidivism reduction among women offenders. For example, when an offender participates in a religious-based programme, it is never an assurance that they will desist from criminal activities.

In an attempt to examine the influence of specific religious programme activities on recidivism, Duwe et al. (2023) posit that offender participation in religious activities such as studying religious texts, corporate prayer, discipleship and evangelism tend to empower inmates psychologically. This empowers them to adjust to the correctional rehabilitative culture. Martinus and Tinenti (2024) further established that offenders' participation in religious programmes such as Christian correspondence courses, baptism and Holy Communion services positively impact inmates' behavioural tendencies. Some empirical studies show an inverse relationship between the influences of religious correctional programmes and recidivism reduction (Johnson, 2021). The current study improves on the methodological weaknesses of past studies, which did not use in-depth narrative approaches while investigating the influence of correctional programmes on recidivism reduction. It also uses data from multiple sources to allow triangulation to provide a more comprehensive analysis of recidivism trends about participation in specific religious-based rehabilitation programmes.

Risk Factors for Re-offending in Women

Studies show a distinctive need to provide women offenders with non-discriminatory rehabilitative facilities that promote gender equality (Aduse-Poku, 2022). To deter inmates from re-offending, criminal justice systems embrace gender-responsive approaches that are meant to prevent inmates from recidivist tendencies (Ankita, 2021). The argument is further advanced by Iyobebe (2022), who posits that the absence of gender-responsive correctional treatment facilities have a positive correlation with female re-offending behaviour. The author above posits that a significant number of adult female offenders are vulnerable to recidivism due to the lack of female-friendly treatment facilities in a wide range of correctional programmes. In addition, the findings of Grace et al. (2022) established that women often relapse into criminal activities as a result of single parenthood, substance abuse, unhealthy interpersonal relationships, poverty, mental disorder, history of trauma, broken marriages, low level of academic achievement, and economic insecurity as exhibited in unemployment. Other recidivism risk factors include inadequate employment skills and specialised medical treatment such as gynecological services. On the contrary, Kolbeck et al. (2024) study found that women's employment and economic status did not significantly affect their desistance from criminogenic behavioural tendencies.

Religious-based Programmes and Recidivism

The study only examined Christian rehabilitation programmes because such faith programmes have been institutionalised in all correctional facilities in Kenya. As observed by Priyatmono and Anwar (2024), chaplaincy services supervise the programmes and emphasize spiritual transformation, moral values, good conduct and obedience to the laws of the land. Timbers et al. (2024) state that religious-based spiritual programmes include spiritual care, discipleship, the study of religious sacred texts, corporate prayer, baptism services and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Priyatmono and Anwar (2024) also show that there is a

positive association between offender participation in religious-based programmes and recidivism reduction among incarcerated women. Opponents of religious-based rehabilitation programmes argue that the programmes' relationship with the reduction of recidivism rates was unclear. Conversely, Aduse-Poku (2022) explains that offenders who frequently participate in religious programme activities tend to acquire positive attitudes that help them acquire law-abiding behavioural patterns. The trend of positive association between recidivism and participation in religious programmes validated by Okwuosa et al. (2024) established that participation in religious-based programmes results in higher resilience, psychological healing and the acquisition of positive attitudes. Thus, the communal nature of such programmes provides offenders with a social and supportive network for change in attitude towards crime and deviant behaviour.

According to Peled-Laskov and Taxman (2024), when offenders are exposed to cognitive behavioural therapy, they acquire skills to transform their criminogenic attitudes, behaviours, beliefs and thoughts. The finding of the latter study corroborates Okwuosa et al. (2024) findings, which established that participation in religious-based programmes has positively affected recidivism reduction amongst offenders. The pattern above is further supported by established indicators of low recidivism rates by ex-convicts who participated in religious-based reform programs during their incarceration.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Feminist pathways and social cognitive theoretical frameworks were used to explain the relationship between religious-based programmes and the recidivism of women offenders.

Feminist Pathways Theory

Feminist pathways theory argues that victimisation and marginalisation of women are the main factors that force women into criminal activities (Gordon & Sutton, 2021). The theory explains that women often relapse into criminal activities as a result of their

vulnerability to poverty, substance use disorders, socio-economic marginalisation, and broken family relationships (Holtfreter et al., 2022). In Africa, the patriarchal system and traditional approaches which promote the belief that women should be subservient to men have pushed both girls and women to extremely delinquent behaviours such as substance abuse including alcohol. Studies have identified five unique pathways which are associated with feminist pathway theory. These include childhood abuse or neglect, addiction to drugs, abusive family relationships and mental illness (Holtfreter et al., 2022). Feminist pathway theory was found to be relevant to the study since it helped maximise the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods in examining the perception of women on the contribution of correctional rehabilitation programs regarding recidivism. The study applied the theory to determine the effectiveness of correctional rehabilitation programmes and to inform recommendations on relevant correctional interventions which are effective in recidivism reduction.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura first introduced social cognitive theory in the 1960s. It advocates that learning occurs within a social setting whenever the learner interacts with the environment to change behavioural tendencies (Kelly, 2020). These experiences, coupled with personal factors, influence the behavioural patterns of offenders as a result of their participation in rehabilitation programs. Several studies have undertaken to apply social cognitive theory to demonstrate a change of behavior; however, a limited number of studies have investigated how the theory relates to the recidivism of women offenders who participate in correctional rehabilitation programs. According to the theory, Rubino et al. (2020) posit that the nature of the environment and access to social support systems in correctional programs determine an offender's behavioural tendencies. This implies that an offender's participation in correctional rehabilitation programs is likely to result in offenders' ability to develop

livelihood and employment skills, which is critical to relapse prevention. Acquisition of such skills would enable an offender to change from criminal to law-abiding behaviour. Ramakers et al. (2017) study on employment characteristics and recidivism risks after release also observes similar law abiding tendencies exhibited by offenders upon successful participation in rehabilitation programs. In this context, custodial rehabilitation programme activities are useful as agents of reinforcement towards the performance of particular law-abiding behaviour due to acquisition of positive attitudes and moral resolve to desist from criminal tendencies. Bandura's theory (2014) further emphasises that individual experiences and behavioural patterns are shaped by a person's cognitive ability and interaction with the environment. The study employs the theory to examine the extent to which offender participation in custodial programmes influences the change of behaviour by women convicts (Bandura, 2006).

Methods

Research Design

A research design is a blueprint for collecting, measuring, and analysing information consistent with the research objectives (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The study adopted an in-depth narrative qualitative approach to analyse the research phenomenon. The design was considered appropriate to gain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon and best suited for cross-validation and corroboration of findings (Dawadi et al., 2021). Respondents were probed on their practical life experiences regarding the influence of correctional programs on recidivism trends. Quantitative descriptive design was also employed to establish cause-and-effect relationships between dependent and independent variables (Dawadi et al., 2021). The method was used to compare, describe and show relationships between variables and generalise findings. The themes of the study were generated from the participants' experiences following their participation in correctional programmes as well as

recidivism tendencies. Participants' responses were used to ascertain the relevance of the study's theoretical framework (Dawadi et al., 2021).

The design was established to be relevant for the study since it allowed for triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The study employed an illustrative case study model to capture participants' practical rehabilitation and recidivism experiences of the respondents. The design also incorporated secondary data analysis, such as Kenya prison's strategic plans, annual reports, statistical data, journals, and primary data analysis. Data was collected from women repeat offenders who participated in religious-based programmes. Interviews, according to Roberts (2020), were found flexible and suitable for collecting qualitative data. This collection method helped provide the space for follow-up questions based on comments and perceptions and enhanced interaction with respondents, which will provide meaningful answers.

Sample Size

As argued by Hasan et al. (2021), the sample size is determined by its representativeness and the sampling strategy employed by the researcher. Due to the need to uphold the confidentiality and rights of the legible respondents, the researcher employed a snowball non-probability sampling technique to identify and interview the participants. The researcher was guided by the correctional facility lock-up register, which comprised a total study population of 130 inmates. The officers in charge of rehabilitation programmes were present to ensure that all the prison rules were adhered to during the interview sessions. Interview sessions began with an initial small group of two respondents who volunteered and consented to participate in the interview sessions (Etikan, 2016). Thereafter, respondents were requested to refer other potential respondents who met the study criteria to participate in the interview sessions. Before proceeding with each interview session, the researcher ascertained the eligibility criteria of each potential participant. The interview process was

done under confidentiality and gradually expanded in scope. The participants used their social networks to make referrals until the researcher reached saturation point after interviewing 48 participants, which translates to 37%. Data was collected through survey questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, key informant guides and focus group discussion guides during follow-up interview sessions. The second data collection phase involved interviewing six key informants purposively selected among prison officers supervising rehabilitation programmes. Homa Bay Women GoK Correctional Facility was chosen for the study because its catchment area had a high crime prevalence rate of women offenders. The correctional facility also institutionalised varied correctional programmes which targeted the rehabilitation of women offenders.

Ethical Assurance

Consent and voluntary participation were sought from sampled respondents. Requisite permits, licenses and authorization were secured from all the relevant institutions, which included the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Kenyatta National Hospital-University of Nairobi Ethics Research Committee License, Commissioner General of Kenya Prisons approval, and Ministry of Education Research Authorization. Data collected was safely stored daily and later analysed by the principal researcher. The study findings were reported in strict adherence to non-violation of respondents' fundamental human rights (Hasan et al., 2021).

Results and Discussion

The study evaluated the influence of religious faith-based programmes on the recidivism of repeat women offenders. It hypothesised that women repeat offenders' participation in religious faith-based rehabilitation programmes did not have a positive influence on recidivism trends. The study further examined the extent to which specific

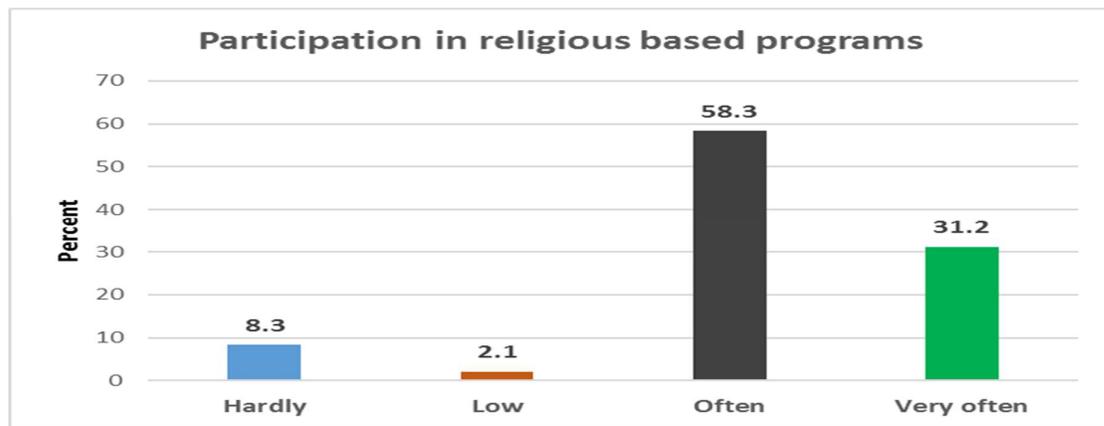
religious-based programmes contributed to recidivism reduction in women's correctional facilities in Kenya.

Participation of Respondents in Religious Programmes

The study further sought to establish the frequency of women offenders' participation in religious programs as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Participation of Respondents in Faith-Based Programs



The current study established the level of participation in religious programmes to be at 58% very often and 31.2% (often), respectively. This is an indication that the majority of respondents often participated in religious-based activities. The study further established that the religious-based programme activities were integral to correctional rehabilitation programmes for all women repeat offenders. The significant level of offender participation in religious activities is proof that the programmes played a positive role in reducing recidivism. The result of the current study is found to be consistent with Marimo et al. (2021) and Ondeng et al. (2021) studies, which established that religious faith-based programmes have a positive influence towards the reduction of recidivism rates. The high participation rate of offenders in the programmes could also be attributed to the fact that religion offers hope and

a sense of purpose and gives a strong spiritual support system, which is vital for changing attitudes towards criminal activities.

Respondents' Rating on the Influence of Religious-based Programs on Recidivism.

The study further sought to establish how religious-based programmes influence recidivism as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Respondents' Rating on the Influence of Religious-based Programs on Recidivism.

Influence of Religious Programs	Frequency	Percent%
Very high	13	27
High	16	33.3
Moderate	12	25
Low	4	8.5
Very low	3	6.2
Total	48	100

Source: Primary Data, 2023

The study found that the extent to which religious-based rehabilitation programmes influenced recidivism was cumulatively rated high at 60.3% (with a very high 27% and a high 33.3%) by the respondents. The finding reveals that participants felt that religious-based programmes significantly affected recidivism reduction since only 8.5% and 6.2% rated the programme's influence on recidivism as low and very low, respectively. The results of the current study were consistent with Osina and Omboto's (2024) and Kiemo's (2022) study findings, which established that religious-based programmes positively impact recidivism reduction. It is worth noting that the above finding was also corroborated by a participant in FGD 5 who, in response to the contribution of a religious-based program on recidivism reduction, explained that:

"Prayer is the lifeline for most of us. It is only God whom we can trust and call for help. I find hope, strength and encouragement during prayer sessions" (Extract: Translated from Dho-luo language, third participant during FGD5 interview session).

Another participant in Focus Group 8 also corroborates this partly, that reported:

"Since my incarceration six months ago, I have found hope, strength and inner healing from prayer sessions which we frequently observe (...) I believe God is great, and I thank him for hearing my daily cry (...) Initially, I thought completing my sentence in the right state of mind would be impossible. However, through prayer, I have acquired peace and hope for a better tomorrow." (Excerpt: Translated from Dho-luo language, Fifth Participant from Focus Group 2 at the Homa Bay GoK Women Prison).

Furthermore, another respondent from the same focus group, Participant Three, concurred with the same view while responding to the question regarding the influence of religious-based programmes on crime deterrence. The second participant had this to say regarding the influence of religious programs on crime deterrence:

"Religious-based programs such as regular prayers and daily Bible study make us strong and help us to change our attitude towards criminal habits (...) The programs allow us to mend our ways through repentance and teach us how to work hard and earn a living rightfully (...) I believe that scripture reading is my daily discipline. Bible stories like Joseph's give me much hope for a better tomorrow (...) Since I renewed my commitment to participation in regular corporate prayer services, my attitude towards crime has changed (...) Previously, I thought a life of crime was beneficial, but now I have realised that the wages of crime would result in nothing but suffering (...) I thank God for his consolation and encouragement. Despite trials and temptations, I have faith that God will keep me from criminal activities after my release (...) I will continue to trust in the power of God, who can sustain and provide for my needs (...) I have already resolved to work with my own hands to

earn a living, never again to be involved in the sale of illicit liquor. I do not want my life to be destroyed again (...) My criminal past is now behind me since I found solace, forgiveness and peace in God's word." (Excerpt: Translated from Dho-luo language, Sixth Participant from Focus Group 3 at the Homa Bay GoK Women Prison).

The above quotes illustrate the perception of the majority of repeat female offenders who thought that religious correctional programs play a positive influence towards their efforts to desist from criminal recidivism. The findings show that the respondents believed religious-based programs positively reduced recidivism. However, it remained unclear whether ex-inmates continued their devotion to prayer worship activities upon release from custody.

Contribution of Religious-based Spiritual Programmes on Recidivism Reduction.

The study further interrogated the level at which each religious programme contributed to reducing the recidivism of women repeat offenders. It established that most respondents perceived that several religious-based programme activities positively contributed to reduced recidivism among women repeat offenders. Table 2 shows the level at which each spiritual activity helped repeat female offenders desist from relapse to crime.

Table 2

Contribution of Faith-based Spiritual Programs Activities on Recidivism Reduction

Faith-based spiritual programs	Sig. level
Spiritual ordinances	0.864
Bible correspondence courses	0.512
Disciple-making activities	0.614
Study of sacred religious books	0.661

Source: Primary Data, 2023

The summary of findings shown in Table 2 above indicates that spiritual ordinances had the highest rating (0.864), followed by a study of sacred religious books (0.661), disciple-making activities (0.614), and Bible correspondence courses rated (0.512), respectively on a scale of between 0 and 1. This corresponds to studies by Johnson (2021) that held that spiritual ordinances and studying sacred religious books significantly contribute to the reduction of recidivism. Incarcerated inmates who are exposed to studying religious books often acquire mental and emotional stability, which is vital for their resolve to desist from crime.

Relationship between Religious Programs and Recidivism (Chi-square)

The study sought to confirm the study assumptions as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3

Relationship between Religious Programs and Recidivism (Chi-square)

Religious Activities	F Value	Asymptotic significance (2 sided)
Congregational prayer	7.072	0.314
Studying sacred books	2.719	0.606
Disciple-making activities	2.437	0.875
Bible correspondence	1.722	0.943
Evangelism programs	3.100	0.796
Spiritual ordinances	7.124	0.310
Corporate Worship	7.072	0.314

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Summary of Influence of Faith-Based Spiritual Programmes on Recidivism

The study established that most respondents participated in faith-based activities at a rating of 58.3% and 31.2% for often and very often, respectively. However, an insignificant

proportion of respondents (10.3%) hardly participated in these programmes. The findings further established that the faith-based religious programmes remained an integral part of correctional that helped in the process of rehabilitating repeat women offenders. Regarding the spiritual programmes' contribution to recidivism reduction, it was established that most respondents believed that faith-based spiritual programmes had a significant contribution to recidivism reduction. For example, seventy-five per cent (75%) of the respondents rated the extent to which these programs aided recidivism reduction as high. The rest of the respondents (25%) rated the contribution of religious programmes towards recidivism reduction as moderate. The current study's findings were consistent with Johnson's (2021) study, which established that faith-based spiritual programs positively contributed to recidivism reduction of recidivist offenders in correctional settings.

The results further found that specific faith-based spiritual activities significantly reduced recidivism. Religious activities that significantly reduced recidivism included participation in church based spiritual ordinances such as the practice of sharing Holy Communion (0.864) and the study of sacred religious books (0.661). Other faith-based spiritual activities, such as participation in Bible correspondence courses (0.654) and disciple-making (0.512), were of moderate significance.

The above finding is consistent with previous study findings by Maritim et al. (2018) and Muriuki et al. (2023) which established that there is a positive association between offender participation in religious-based spiritual programs and recidivism reduction among incarcerated women. Hazra and Aranzazu's (2022) study, as corroborated by Ondeng et al. (2021), also concurs with the current study findings by asserting that participation in religious-based programmes significantly contributes to recidivism reduction. Regarding the contribution of specific religious program activities, the findings of the current study are congruent with other empirical studies conducted by Duwe et al. (2023) and Priyatmono and

Anwar (2024), which confirmed that religious-based spiritual programmes had a positive contribution in recidivism reduction. Both studies' findings demonstrate that participation in religious-based activities such as studying religious texts and corporate prayer positively contributes to recidivism reduction among women repeat offenders in Kenya.

Conclusion

The study established that most respondents (58.3%) and (31.2%) often participated in religious-based activities. However, an insignificant % of respondents (8.3%) hardly participated in these programmes. The findings further established that the religious-based programmes remained an integral part of correctional programs for all women offenders. Regarding the programme's contribution to recidivism reduction, it was established that most respondents believed that religious-based programmes significantly contributed to recidivism reduction. For example, fifty-two per cent (52%) and twenty-three per cent (23%) of the respondents rated the extent to which these programs aided recidivism reduction as high and very high, respectively. The study concluded that religious and spiritual liberty and activities should be enhanced in all women's correctional facilities. This is because the programmes play a significant role in helping women convicts acquire emotional, psychological and mental healing, which is vital for their ability to desist from criminal relapse.

Recommendations

The study has demonstrated that participation in religious-based spiritual rehabilitation programmes positively reduces recidivism. To make the programmes more effective, such programmes should be integrated with after-care and re-entry programmes. In addition, there is a need to combine religious-based programmes with vocational training in skills such as soap-making, tailoring, weaving, knitting, hospitality, cookery, entrepreneurship, guidance and counselling and formal education. Penal institutions, governments and stakeholders should work together towards re-designing correctional policy

guidelines that encourage religious liberty. Female friendly correctional programmes should be enhanced to focus more on rehabilitation of repeat women offenders. Such efforts, coupled with enhanced training of correctional staff would help achieve meaningful reintegration of offenders.

References

- Aduse-Poku, A. (2022). *A BAME woman's right to rehabilitation* [Doctoral Dissertation, Queen's University Belfast]. <https://pure.qub.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/a-bame-womans-right-to-rehabilitation>
- Alila, T. W. (2023). *Assessment of rehabilitation programs' effectiveness among male inmates at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, Nairobi City County, Kenya* [Master's Thesis, Kenyatta University]. <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/26535>
- Ankita. (2021). Critical evaluation of the imprisonment and recidivism. *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 4(5), 261–275.
- Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. *Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents*, 5(1), 307–337.
- Bandura, A. (2014). Social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. In *Handbook of moral behavior and development* (45–103). Psychology Press.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315807294-8/social-cognitive-theory-moral-thought-action-albert-bandura>
- Bumphus, W. (2023). *Jailhouse religion: A study on the perceived effects of religious prison rehabilitation that affects recidivism* [Doctoral Dissertation, Liberty University].
<https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/4361>
- Crawford, A. D., Testa, A., Corbett, A., Laine, R., Hutson, T., & Schlafer, R. (2024). Policy alternatives to separating women in prison and their infants. In *Handbook on*

- Contemporary Issues in Health, Crime, and Punishment* (372–395). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003506867-26>
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: A discussion on its types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25–36.
- Dockery, A. (2019). *The influence of social support on recidivism of formerly incarcerated individuals* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/8197>
- Duwe, G., Johnson, B. R., & Hallett, M. (2023). What do correctional leaders think about faith-based programs? Results from a national survey. *The Prison Journal*, 103(6), 707–727. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00328855231208001>
- Ebobo, U. C., Aborisade, R. A., & Atere, A. A. (2024). Predisposing factors and vulnerabilities of females' involvements in armed robbery in Nigeria. *European Review of Applied Sociology*, 17(29), 39–54. <https://doi.org/10.2478/eras-2024-0010>
- Grace, S., O'Neill, M., Walker, T., King, H., Baldwin, L., Jobe, A., Lynch, O., Seaman, V., Measham, F., & O'Brien, K. (2022). *Criminal women: Gender matters*. Policy Press.
- Hallett, M. (2019). Confronting Christian penal charity: Neoliberalism and the rebirth of religious penitentiaries. *Social Justice*, 45(1), 103–128.
- Hasan, N., Rana, R., Chowdhury, S., Dola, A., & Rony, M. (2021). Ethical considerations in research. *Journal of Nursing Research, Patient Safety and Practise*, 01(01), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.55529/jnrpsp.11.1.4>
- Hazra, D., & Aranzazu, J. (2022). Crime, correction, education and welfare in the US – What role does the government play? *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 44(2), 474–491.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpolmod.2022.03.007>

Heimer, K., Malone, S. E., & Coster, S. D. (2023). Trends in women's incarceration rates in US prisons and jails: A tale of inequalities. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 6(2023),

85–106. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-030421-041559>

Holtfreter, K., Pusch, N., & Golladay, K. A. (2022). Evolution, evidence, and impact of the feminist pathways perspective. *The Wiley handbook on what works with girls and women in conflict with the law* (11–23). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119874898.ch1>

Johnson, B. R. (2021). How religion contributes to the common good, positive criminology, and justice reform. *Religions*, 12(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060402>

Kelly, M. (2020). *The predictive ability of self-efficacy on recidivism among adult male offenders* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University].

<https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/8302>

Kiemo, K. (2022). Criminal rehabilitation in Kenya: Opportunities and pitfalls. In M. Vanstone & P. Priestley (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Rehabilitation in Criminal Justice* (325–337). Springer International Publishing.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14375-5_19

Kolbeck, S., Lopez, S., & Bellair, P. E. (2024). Does stable employment after prison reduce recidivism irrespective of prior employment and offending? *Justice Quarterly*, 41(1),

1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2023.2201330>

Loeffler, C. E., & Nagin, D. S. (2022). The impact of incarceration on recidivism. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 5(5), 133–152. [https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-030920-112506)

[030920-112506](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-030920-112506)

Marimo, P., Otieno, G., Njuguna-Mungai, E., Vernooy, R., Halewood, M., Fadda, C.,

Mulumba, J. W., Nyamongo, D. O., & Mollel, M. (2021). The role of gender and

- institutional dynamics in adapting seed systems to climate change: Case studies from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. *Agriculture*, 11(840).
<https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture11090840>
- Maritim, J. J. (2018). *Determinants of the implementation of rehabilitation programme of male inmates. A case of Kericho Main Prison, Kericho county, Kenya* [Master's Thesis, University of Nairobi]. <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/104067>
- Martinus, M., & Tinenti, H. G. (2024). The impact of spiritual ministry on catholic residents of correctional institutions in West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. *Pastoral Psychology*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01160-9>
- Mbuba, J. M. (Ed.). (2023). *Comparative criminal justice: International trends and practices*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Mburu, H. W., & Okemwa, P. (2021). *Influence of prison life on rehabilitation program uptake by inmates in Kiambu County, Kenya* [Master's Thesis, Kenyatta University]. <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/23327>
- Moles-López, E., & Añaños, F. T. (2021). Factors of prison recidivism in women: A socio-educational and sustainable development analysis. *Sustainability*, 13(11), 5822. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13115822>
- Muriuki, L. N. (2023). *Rehabilitation programmes and recidivism by criminal offenders in Nakuru Main Prison, Kenya* [Master's Thesis, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa]. <http://localhost:4000/handle/123456789/63>
- Okwuosa, L. N., Onu, D. U., & Onyedibe, M. C. C. (2024). Perceived stress and health-related quality of life in cancer patients: The mediating role of religious coping. *Current Psychology*, 43(4), 3166–3174. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04510-7>
- Ondeng, J. M., Sirera, M. A., & Kathungu, B. (2021). Gender-responsive programming in Kenya: Time is ripe. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 31(6), 476–493.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2020.1822147>

- Onyango, E. O., & Elliott, S. J. (2023). Victims or perpetrators, agency, and politics of intimate partner violence in the social construction of health and well-being: A qualitative study from Kenya. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 31(1), 2272762. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2023.2272762>
- Onyango, O. C., Nicholas, O. K., & Adama, M. (2021). Influence of gender on rehabilitation and reintegration of recidivists: A study of female inmates in women's prisons in selected counties in Western Kenya. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 11(8), 50.
- Osina, O. D., & Omboto, J. O. (2024). Availability of prisoner's reformation programmes and uptake determinants at Kitengela Prison in Kenya. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(12). <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2024.1212031>
- Peled-Laskov, R., & Taxman, F. S. (2024). International perspective on treatment as part of probation/parole. In *The Routledge handbook on global community corrections*. Routledge.
- Pretorius, D. (2018). *Reducing recidivism by church rehabilitation programs* [Master's Thesis, North-West University]. <https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/31374>
- Priyatmono, B., & Anwar, U. (2024). Model of Islamic religious, spiritual development for general prisoners in preventing recidivism in prison. *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies*, 6(1), 115–129.
- Ramakers, A., Nieuwbeerta, P., Van Wilsem, J., & Dirkzwager, A. (2017). Not just any job will do: A study on employment characteristics and recidivism risks after release. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 61(16), 1795–1818. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X16636141>
- Roberts, R. (2020). Qualitative interview questions: Guidance for novice researchers. *The*

Qualitative Report, 25(9), 3185–3203. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4640>

Rubino, L., Petkus, A., & Anderson, V. R. (2020). Cognitive and psychological programming for correctional populations. In *Routledge handbook on American prisons*. Routledge.

Sapp, K. (2023). Offender rehabilitation as a contemporary issue. In K. Sapp (Ed.),

Understanding offending populations and the power of correctional psychotherapy:

Unlocking insights (57–75). Springer International Publishing.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45886-6_6

Savatia, A. B. (2021). *Rehabilitation programmes and their influence on management of juvenile delinquency within penal institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya* [Doctoral Dissertation]. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

Smith, Andrew, Anton Roberts, Karolina Krzemieniewska-Nandwani, Liz Eggins, Will

Cook, Chris Fox, Shadd Maruna, Stephanie Wallace, and Kirstine Szifris. 2024. “Revisiting the Effectiveness of Cognitive-behavioural Therapy for Reducing Reoffending in the Criminal Justice System: A Systematic Review.” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 20(3):1–12. doi: [10.1002/cl2.1425](https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1425).

Timbers, V., Hollenberger, J. T., & University of Utah. (2024). Christian mindfulness and mental health: Coping through sacred traditions and embodied awareness. *Religions*, 13(1), 62. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010062>