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## Establishing Prison Libraries in Tanzania: Prospects and Challenges

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# ***Establishing Prison Libraries in Tanzania: Prospects and Challenges***

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## **Abstract**

*Despite the educational support role that libraries can play to prisoners in Tanzania as inmates can pursue long distance education and other formal or informal education, no prison in the country has yet to establish a library. This study, therefore, sets out to understand prospects of and challenges to establishing a prison library in Tanzania's prisons taking two Dar es salaam-based central prisons dubbed X and Y as twin case studies. The study used an explorative qualitative research design to achieve its objectives. Data was collected from purposively and conveniently selected sample of using questionnaires, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Of the 300 distributed questionnaires, 222 were returned hence yielding a response rate of 74 percent. There were also three focus group discussion with six prisoners per group and in-depth interviews with the heads of prisons and prison officials overseeing prisoners' educational programmes. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 20 whereas qualitative data was subjected to content analysis. The study found that prisoners have information needs that are inadequately met. Many of the prisoner respondents (194 (83%, n=194) wanted academic books covering law, health, business to build their knowledge base; 160 (68%) wanted newspapers and magazines; 145 (72%) prisoners wanted religious books; and 99 (43%) prisoners wanted novels and non-fiction books. Many of them (52%, n=142) resorted to borrowing from their fellow prisoners; 69 (25%) were asked friends and relatives to bring needed information on visitation days; 19 (7%) obtained information from prison officials; and a few 41 (15%, n=41) reported not getting any information at all. Under these circumstances, an overwhelming majority of the prisoner respondents (95.5%, n=212) affirmed the need to have a prison library to help them get legal information pertaining to their cases, support their education endeavours via ODL, keep them abreast of the world outside, and for them pass time in their incarceration. Only a handful (4.5%, 10) saw no need to establish a prison library; instead, they called for measures to ease congestion and expediting of trial cases. Challenges facing prison establishment include financial challenges, manpower for the library, facilities and collection development. The study, therefore, recommends for stakeholders' involvement, government support and financial support for the successful establishment and sustainability of prison libraries. No rehabilitation programme is complete without the library to support information provision and despite their incarceration; prisoners still need information to bridge the gap between them and the outside world. This paper delved into the prospects and challenges of establishing prison libraries in Tanzania. The findings of the study offer insight to the Tanzania Prison Services and societal stakeholders on how the endeavour can be achieved.*

**Key words:** *Prison Library, Prisoners, Information Rights, Rehabilitation programmes, Information Needs, Prisoners in Tanzania*

## **Introduction**

The Tanzania prison system, aside from housing prisoners in accordance with the law and providing security to community and inmates, also strives to provide various educational programmes to offenders while serving their sentences. These programmes include vocational training, formal and informal education provision and higher learning opportunities through Open Distance Learning (ODL) of the Open University of Tanzania. The major aim of these programmes is to equip prisoners with knowledge on how to be good citizens once they complete their sentence and assist them to acquire new skills to continue their lives in the society as upstanding and rehabilitated citizens, thus reducing recidivism.

## **The Rationale**

Despite the existence of all these noble programmes in the country's prison system, none of the prisons has yet established a prison library, which could play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation of prisoners. The prison library could also offer other benefits such as recreational reading to prisoners, supporting vocational training, facilitating formal and informal education that the prison system provides to its prisoners, and ensuring that prisoners get information updates even behind bars. This study investigated the prospects of and challenges of establishing prison libraries using two central prisons as case study. Specifically, the study set out to determine the accruing benefits of a prison library, the attendant challenges and, ultimately, offer recommendations on how to mitigate them.

## **Literature Review: Prison Library in Perspective**

Prison administrations and other competent authorities should offer education, vocational training and work, as well as other forms of appropriate and available assistance such as remedial, moral, spiritual, social and health- and sport-based support. All such programmes,

activities and services should be delivered in line with the individual needs of prisoners (Allen, Meissner and Jordan-Ethvignot, 2017). As the prison population soars annually as more and more people get locked up every day, much depends on how the society treats its prisoners can tell much about its culture (Jukes, 2006).

In Tanzania, the prison system has taken more of a punitive rather than rehabilitative approach to imprisonment (Kiruku, 2014). This is evidenced by how prisoners are treated as source of labour, the environment that they live in, and the challenges that they face. However, more recently, policies have been enacted to change and embrace rehabilitation more than the punitive stance. Exploring the role of prisons in Tanzania, William (1980) provides a historical perspective, noting that after the country gained its independence, it introduced a new policy aimed to foster acceptance or reformation of offenders as the main objective of imprisonment. However, the reality on the ground does not match with this orientation as prisons appear more inclined towards punishing rather than rehabilitating. Since independence much has changed in the country and the world at large as modern societies gradually adopt a more humane and enlightened practice of criminal justice and incarceration in accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Consequently, many a nation are shifting their focus from punishment to education, rehabilitation, and constructive use of the prisoners' time during confinement.

As a result, inmates in some prisons can participate in prison education as part of the rehabilitation programmes. Developed countries such as Australia, Canada, the US, the UK and New Zealand embrace the idea of prison educational programmes saving the communities the costs of recidivism and crime. Prison education can equip inmates with knowledge and skills useful in their after-prison life (Msoroka, 2018). Moreover, Msoroka (2018) continue to observe

that Tanzania's today's focus of prisons is also about inmate rehabilitation because of where the world is at and the human rights requirement. Notably, prison education seeks to change prisoners' mindsets so that they can adopt socially-acceptable behaviours and attitudes. Prison education might also help prisoners to undertake perspective transformation and become 'good citizens' upon their release.

Dalton (1977) takes us back in time covering developed countries and note that historically, prison libraries are not new. Ireland's first prison library was established in 1827 at Richmond General Penitentiary for rehabilitation purposes. In Sweden, the history of prison libraries dates back to the 1840s. In the Netherlands and Belgium, library services to prisons are provided under the Ministry of Justice and all prisons in Belgium provide a library to its prisoners. Similarly, in Switzerland, Australia and Canada prison libraries offer services to the inmates through a designated prison official; in other exceptional cases, for instance, in Geneva, the services are offered by a Librarian from the public library system.

In Africa, some Nigerian prisons have places designated as libraries within their facilities. This library space is usually in a squeezed welfare office with outdated books, donated by religious groups or public libraries (Eze, 2015). After all, prison libraries are not backed in the constitution and are not part of the public library system in many an African country (Eze, 2015). In South Africa, the Prisons Department has the responsibility of instituting prison libraries as part of its rehabilitation programme in collaboration with the National Education Section for Library Services (Dalton, 1977).

Prison libraries are an integral part of programmes established by the prison system. As Albert (1989) has noted while interrogating the rationale behind prison libraries enumerated some of its

roles and rationales, noting that libraries in prison can help to achieve additional perspective amongst prisoners, thereby, instilling knowledge on how to look at problems and opening ways for positive behavioural change. Moreover, through dissemination of materials, the library program enriches the other educational efforts within prisons. Furthermore, with existing rehabilitation programs available in prisons, a library is necessary component to complement these programs with dependable supplementary materials. Albert (1989) further notes: “No educational program today can be considered complete nor is taken seriously without strong library input” p. (126).

Consequently, prison libraries have increasingly become integral part of rehabilitative programmes as they provide support to all programming efforts, particularly educational ones. Prison education, services’ educational and vocational units focus upon the teaching of new or improving existing skills. Moreover, Lehmann and Locke (2005) support this assertion thusly:

The prison library then becomes an important part of the entire prison environment in its support for educational, recreational, and rehabilitative programs. The prison library also provides a level of ‘normalcy’ in a highly regulated environment as a place where individuals are free to make their own choices and engage in self-directed pursuits. The library presents a window to the outside world and can provide much useful information for those preparing for release to the outside world (Lehmann and Locke, 2005:5).

Additionally, the authors contend that, an incarcerated person has not relinquished the right to learn and to access information and, thus, the prison library should offer materials and services comparable to community libraries in the “free” world (Lehmann and Locke, 2005). In this regard, Restrictions to accessing library materials and information should be imposed only when such access presents a danger to prison security. In fact, prison libraries should emulate the public library model while providing resources for prison education and rehabilitation

programmes. They could help satiate other prison specific requirements using legal collections. Furthermore, the prison library should accord offenders with an opportunity to develop literacy skills, pursue personal and cultural interests, as well as life-long learning. The library should provide resources for all these activities.

Therefore, it is imperative to have a prison library as extant literature has observed (Dalton, 1977; Albert, 1989; Eze, 2015; Hussain *et al.*, 2019). Despite their imprisonment, prisoners have equal rights to read and get useful education. For prisoners, a library symbolises freedom and a place for forgetting their problems during incarceration since they are not allowed to leave until after honouring their sentences (Hussain *et al.*, 2019). As Dalton (1977) observed, the establishment operations of prison libraries differ from country to country, as well as from one political jurisdiction to another within the country.

The literature reviewed thus far expose a geographical gap as they were conducted elsewhere abroad and other parts of Africa with different operating environments. Moreover, the literature review indicates a research gap as prison library research in Tanzania is often taken for granted and, perhaps, because of the non-existence of such facilities in the country's prisons. As such, this study aims to examine the prison system in Tanzania and determine its openness and readiness to establish libraries in prisons and establish the attendant challenges before offering recommendations. In so doing, the study will help fill both the geographical and research gap on prison libraries in the developing country context of Tanzania.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study specifically set out to:

- i. Establish the information needs of prisoners in the selected central prisons in Tanzania,

- ii. Examine the prospects of establishing prison libraries in the selected central prisons in Tanzania, and ,subsequently,
- iii. Design a framework for establishing prison libraries in Tanzania based on the realities on the ground.

## **Methodology**

The study used an explorative qualitative research design to examine the prospects of and challenges to establishing prison libraries in the context of Tanzania. In this study, convicted males and females prisoners formed the sample together with the heads of prison and officials overseeing the education and information provision to prisoners. Convenience sampling was used to identify the respondents to participate in the study to form a sample. In the field, 300 questionnaires were given to prison officials to administer to the conveniently selected prisoners. Finally, 222 questionnaires were returned, hence yielding a response rate of 74 percent. Moreover, the study carried out one focus group discussion in each prison with six (6) inmates to obtain in-depth information on their information needs and establish how beneficial the library would be to them. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews helped to collect data from prison officials and heads of prison. This triad of data collection methods were complementary and enhanced the rigour of the study much in line with the triangulation principle. The study also observed research protocol. To begin with, the study adhered to ethical conduct by obtaining as permission from the Commissioner General of Prisons in Tanzania to collect data from the two prisons under review. All the respondents voluntarily participated in the study and those who refused, their denial was respected. Also, the identity of the participants has not been revealed anywhere in this report.



## Findings and Discussion

In the two studied prisons (X and Y), as Table 1 illustrates, 87 (39%) were prisoners and 135 (61%) were remandees. Gender-wise, the number of men from X and Y central prisons were 149 (67%) whereas women from Y central prison were 73 (33%). The findings further indicate that the number of remandees at Y central prison exceeded that of convicted prisoners by 64 (79%) men and 69 (95%) women, respectively compared to two (3%) remandees at X central prison. This distribution is linked to the prisoner allocation by the Tanzania Prison System whereby X is the first maximum security prison in Tanzania with a capacity of housing 1,040 prisoners with longer sentences and those with death penalty whereas Prison Y is a central prison designed specifically for remandees and for those prisoners with shorter or lighter sentences that do not exceed five years.

**Table 1: Type of Prisoner**

Type of prisoner	Y Central Prison (men)		Y Central Prison (Women)		X Central Prison		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Prisoner	17	21%	4	5%	66	97%	87	39%
Remandee	64	79%	69	95%	02	3%	135	61%
Total	81	100%	73	100%	68	100%	222	100%

Source: Field Data (2019)

As Table 1 illustrates, most of the prisoners (61%, n=135) were remandees from Y central prison. Most of them reported that they were still awaiting their trials while others had ongoing trials and had to attend court sessions whenever their cases were due. Some remandees had been there for few months and others for years. Only 17 (21%) men and four (5%) women were prisoners at Prison Y serving sentences of less than five years. At X central prison, on the other hand, only two (3%) were remandees with the majority (57%, n=39) serving sentences of 16-30 years; 15 (22%) had 56 years to life imprisonment and death sentences; seven (10%) had 1-15 years

sentence; three (4%) had 31-45 years sentence and two (3%) had 46-55 years prison sentences. A similar percentage represented remandees at Prison X. Some of the prisoners at Prison X, though sentenced had appealed their cases and trials were at the High Court awaiting hearing whereas some appeal cases were ongoing.

**Table 2: Duration of Imprisonment at Prison X and Y**

Duration of Imprisonment	Y Central Prison (Men)		Y Central Prison (Women)		X Central Prison		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Remandee	64	79%	69	95%	02	3%	135	61%
1-15 yrs	17	21%	4	5%	07	10%	28	13%
16-30 yrs	-	-	-	-	39	57%	39	18%
31-45 yrs	-	-	-	-	03	4%	03	1%
46-55 yrs	-	-	-	-	02	3%	02	0.9%
56- Life	-	-	-	-	15	22%	15	7%
Total	81	100%	73	100%	68	99%	222	100%

Source: Field Data (2019)

### **Information Needs of the Prisoners**

Prisoners and remandees at X and Y central prisons were asked to indicate their information needs. The results, as summarised in Table 3, show that in all the prisons, many wanted academic books on different subjects, especially on law and health as indicated by 194 (83%) prisoners. At Prison Y, 74 (29%) responding male inmates wanted books on law to help them with their cases as most of the prisoners were still remandees with pending cases. Meanwhile, 61 (27%) women inmates also wanted books on maternal health and post-natal as some of the prisoners were pregnant whereas others had children with them in prison. In this regard, Zoia (2005) noted that women needs differ from those of men as most of women prisoners suffer from chronic health conditions resulting from poverty, family violence, sexual assault, teenage pregnancy, malnutrition and poor preventative health care. During FGDs one woman prisoner noted:

...we need all types of information as in here the women are of different age groups, ethnicity, with differing interest and education level. However, health information is vital as some have babies with them in here and others are pregnant. Information on diseases, health care, counselling, and post-natal care will be beneficial to women and it must be in Kiswahili too; not limited to English only.

On the other hand, 59 (27%) prisoners from Prison X wanted academic books covering pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Moreover, they wanted university books on law, business administration, and project management. Generally, they also wanted access to dictionaries, encyclopaedias and reference books because Prison X provides access to education, with some prisoners pursuing further education through ODL. As such, they reported an urgent need for academic books to facilitate the completion of their studies. During FGDs one of the respondents from X central prison said:

...we need English and Kiswahili language, [we need books on] Biology, Mathematics, History, Geography and Civics. Since we also use the government syllabus for pre-primary, primary and secondary school, any books on these aspects will be of benefit to us. Additionally, we also need dictionaries, encyclopaedia and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) introductory books.

Both prison X and Y respondents insisted on availing law books and, specifically, books on Police General Orders (PGO), the Tanzania Evidence Act (TEA) to assist them with their ongoing trials and appeals and the Criminal Procedure Act (CPA). Many of the prison respondents were interested in law as they were not sure the offences they were accused of committing were legally binding or not and many did not even know which piece of legislation could help them with their cases. Some even requested that seminars on law education be provided to the inmate or the use of book clubs discussion to raise awareness and equip prisoners with more knowledge so that they could eventually turn into responsible citizens after their release from prison or remand.

The prison respondents also reported the need for newspapers and magazines in both prisons X and Y as indicated by 160 (68%) prisoners. Many insisted that such publications would keep them abreast of the developments within and outside the country during their incarceration. Some also noted that they needed information on proposed bills, laws, parliament discussions, formulated policies and sports information to refresh and minimise the gap between them and the society.

Furthermore, the prison respondents requested for religious books, as indicated by 145 (72%) the prisoners. Many noted that they got lonely in the prisons and the only people, who visited them, apart from friends and relatives, were religious leaders (priests, pastors and sheikhs) from different churches and mosques. They received comfort from the religious word and prayed to get by everyday during their incarceration. Thus, they reported, they could borrow and read the Bible and the Qurans as well as other religious story books to uplift their spirits and develop their spirituality. Similarly, Eze (2015) reported that originally prisons limited information provision and reading to Holy Books and other religious materials with the sole aim of fostering morality and good behaviour among the inmates.

Finally, some of the responding inmates wanted access to novels and non-fiction books, as indicated by 99 (43%) prisoners respectively. In this regard, prison officials overseeing education aspects in both prisons countered that love stories were not allowed in prison (one suspects it was because confinement did not encourage amorous attentions). As such, novels and non-fiction texts in the genres of mystery, thrillers, and biographies or self-help books could be permissible once their content had been vetted and deemed appropriate by the Prisons Authorities. In this regard, Berzina (2019) in her article on prison literature project noted that most prisons had a list of restricted books for example those on sex, racism, riots, violence and unlawful gambling. In

addition, some prisons did not allow hard cover bound books while others wanted all the books to be new or at least look newish (Berzina, 2019).

In an article on underground group supplying Pittsburgh’s prisoners with books, Nagin (2019) noted that prisoners wanted dictionaries, comics, books on World War II, landscaping and religion. They also wanted *sudoku* and crosswords to keep their minds sharp and occupied. Furthermore, they wanted books on drawing, vampires and music. They also wanted guides on investing and self-help activities (Berzina, 2019). Overall, through books and information, the prisoners sought a line to the outside world where other voices spoke to them across kilometres and years, telling stories and offering them access to the much needed new knowledge. Apparently, they also to learn, to escape, to feel less alone from the books and the comfort they engendered.

**Table 3: Information Prisoners Needed**

Information needed	Y Central Prison (Men)		Y Central Prison (Women)		X Central Prison		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	freq	%
Newspapers and Magazines	58	23%	58	25%	44	20%	160	68%
Novels	33	13%	32	14%	34	16%	99	43%
Religious Books	58	23%	42	18%	45	21%	145	72%
Academic Books on different subjects (e.g. Law books, health, business books etc)	74	29%	61	27%	59	27%	194	83%
Nonfiction books i.e. biographies, inspirational books, memoirs etc.	30	12%	35	15%	34	16%	99	43%

Source: Field Data (2019)

During FGDs one of the prisoners augmented the findings by saying:

...prisoners need information while in prison and our relatives bring them to us during visitation days. However, the information available is not sufficient as many do not get visitors, hence they do not get information. Thus, there is always a scramble for newspapers, magazines, books, law books, and novels [whenever they are available]. We need more information availed to us...

Another prisoner at X prison said:

...the information available should consider prisoners' level of education. Most [of the inmates] have primary education and others secondary and university education whereas some do not even know how to read and write. Thus, there should be diverse information materials available in Kiswahili [from which the majority would highly benefit] and in English too. But not limit the information to only English as the language barrier could alienate many from using it.

**Table 4: Ways through which Prisoners obtain Information**

Ways	Y Central prison (Men)		Y Central Prison (Women)		X Central Prison		TOTAL	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Borrowing from my fellow Prisoners	55	63%	44	47.8%	43	46.7%	142	52%
Asking relatives/friends to bring information during visitation days	17	20%	33	35.8%	19	20.6%	69	25%
Through prison officials	05	6%	07	7.6%	07	7.6%	19	7%
I don't get any information	10	11%	08	8.6%	23	25%	41	15%
Total	87	100%	92	99.8%	92	99.9%	271	99%

Source: Field data (2019)

When prisoners were asked about how they obtained information in the absence of a library in their respective prison, many (52%, n=142) indicated that they borrowed materials from their fellow prisoners who had the privilege of obtaining information from their relatives. On the other hand, some (25%, n=69) of the prisoners reported that they obtained information by asking their relatives and friends to bring it to them during visitation days. A few prisoners (15%, n=41) revealed that they obtain information from the prison officials whereas 19 (15%) noted that they did not get any information at all as Table 4 illustrates. During FGDs one prisoner from Y Central Prison reported:

...majority of us obtain information from our fellows who receive newspapers, books, magazines and novels from their visiting relatives. However, the number of prisoners who have this privilege are few relative to the demand in prison. One might get access to a newspaper brought today after three weeks due to the long booking queue waiting to read it.

On the other hand, one prisoner from X Central Prison noted:

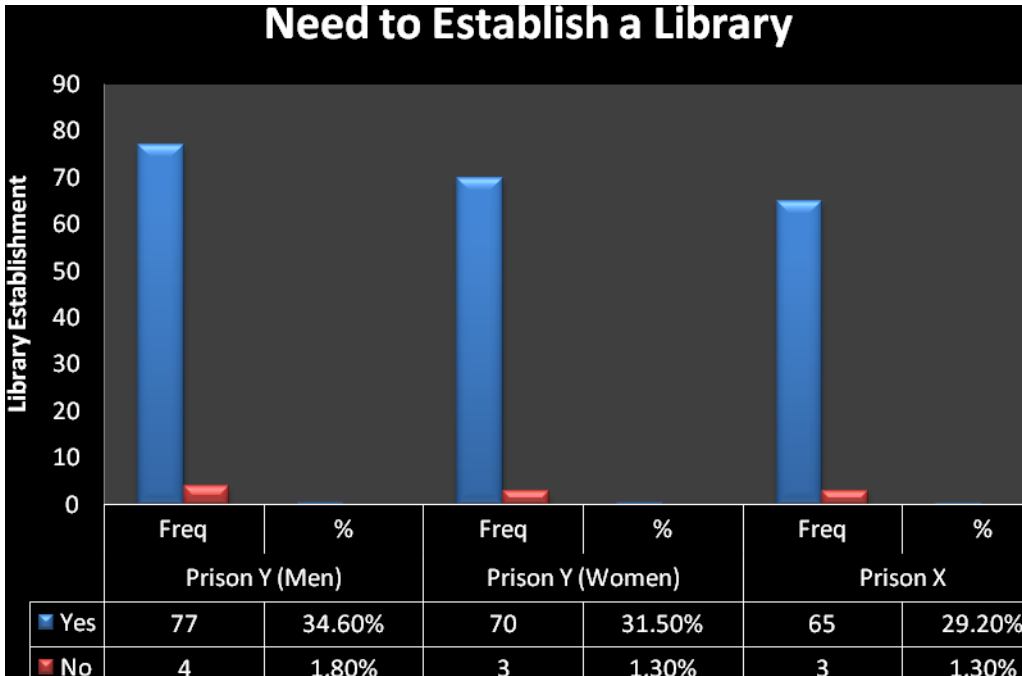
...prison officials who oversee the education programme bring information for those who are pursuing their education via the Open University of Tanzania [through ODL] and for primary students too from the regional education offices. This is helpful. However, the information obtained is only limited to academics when other sources of information such as novels and newspapers are not included.

During an Interview with the prison officials in both prisons it was established that, indeed, Prison Y, an official noted that many of the inmates needed information on law and certain sections or acts of the legislation to help them prepare for their trials whereas at prison X, an official reported that students needed information beyond what the normal education dose covered by their syllabuses as they needed to learn more, keep abreast of and pass time during their imprisonment. Thus, it was difficult for them to meet all the information demands of the prisoners in the absence of a prison library.

### **Prospects of Establishing a Prison Library**

When prisoners were asked to indicate whether there was a need to establish a prison library in their respective prisons in line with the second objective of the study, most of them (95.5%, n=212) responded with a resounding yes. Most of the prisoners supported the establishment of libraries (95.5%, n=212) whereas a few (4.5%, n=10) insisted on no need to establish a prison library. Eze (2015) concurs that educational, library and related programmes are of utmost importance to prisons as the original objective of punishment is abandoned to embrace

rehabilitation and re-socialisation in a bid to equip prisoners with information and skills that would facilitate their successful re-integration into society after serving their sentences.



Source: Field Data (2019)

As Figure 1 illustrates, at X Central Prison 65 (29.2%) prisoners wanted a library to be established in their prison premises as it would support their education pursuit. One prisoner reported:

...I am a Kiswahili teacher at X central prison primary school and I need a library to be able to read and prepare my notes. But most importantly I need a library so that my students can have a quiet place where to read and do their homework. A library would, certainly, compliment the education that the prison provides to the prisoners. We certainly need it [the prison library].

On the other hand, at Y Central Prison 70 (31.5%) female and 77 (34.6%) male prisoners wanted a library to be established. Most of them reported that a library would help them to get information on essential law that is beneficial for their trials while others revealed that once they were locked up with minimal things to do they only wait for your day in court, a library would



help one read, and gain a different perspective on different matters as it would offer a place to meditate and see where they had wrong. During FGDs one female prisoner from Prison Y noted:

...we have novels, newspapers and law books with us in prison but since we don't have a proper place to store them, some of them get torn up whereas others get damaged by water and eventually stolen. A library will also help to house this information and preserve it for longer use making it available to other prisoners too.

Despite the positive affirmations, a few (4.5%, n=10) prisoners did not see the need for a prison library. These prisoners argued that the prison timetable was very full as they started doing their prison duties soon after waking up; others also went to work in the workshop. Once they returned, it was time to eat and get locked up again. The argument these few advanced was that there was not enough time in their schedule to allow them to read, let alone spend time in the library. One of the prisoners from X central prison said during an FGD:

...the prison faces a lot of shortcomings, which range from congestion to shortage of food and poor facilities. Let concentration be on improving these areas first instead of bringing a library [here].

Another prisoner from Y central prison said also during an FGD:

...many want a [prison] library to be established because they want books on law. I have seen prisoners get locked up here and they are very innocent and naive, yet once they get legal knowledge from their fellow prisoners, they gain confidence and start acting worse than when they came in. I believe a library will lead to more recidivism as many will acquire knowledge and know exactly how to get away with crimes [they commit].

When this concern was brought to the head of the prison, he acknowledged the presence of a fixed prison schedule for the inmates but also noted that there was no library available. However, once a library was established a schedule would be pencilled in by the prison officials overseeing education programmes to ensure that they accommodated the interests of prisoners needing to utilise the library just as they make time for extra-curricular activities such as sports. Additionally, the head of Y central prison said:

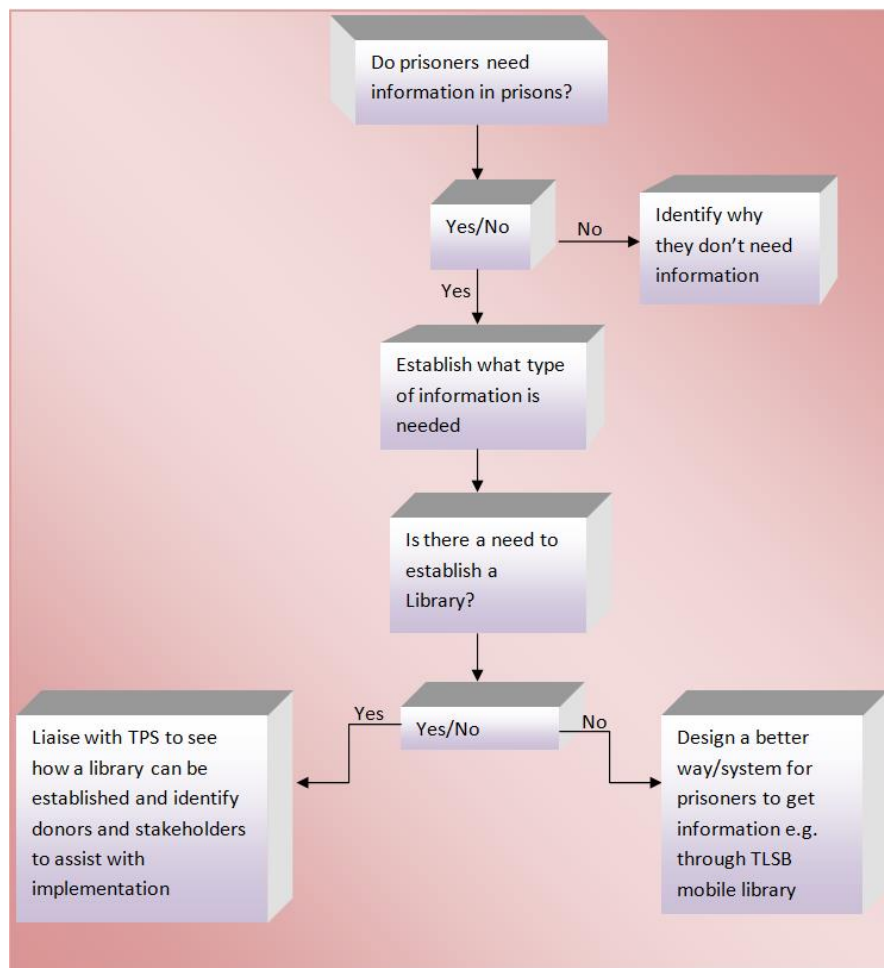
...we do need a library for prisoners. We have not yet established it because of financial challenges and lack of expert inputs and involvement. However, if at all the library gets established, we need it to be the best with good shelves, chairs, tables and relevant collections. I have seen other prisons where a library is just a room with books on the floor covered in dust and collection just too old as donors only donate old, mutilated and unused books from their collections. I do not want that in my prison. It is better not to have it all [if that is the case].

Omagbemi and Odunewi's (2008) findings on the appraisal of library services provision to prison inmates in Nigeria revealed that library stocks in the prison libraries were inadequate and poorly managed, with the collections managed by staff without training in information management. But, most importantly, there was inadequate attention from the government and society on prison library provision. Similarly, Eze (2015) agrees that libraries existing in Nigerian prisons are small and ill-equipped, marked by insufficient quantity and quality of reading materials. Furthermore, a 1998 report on the National Prisons Project of South Africa observed similar challenges and acknowledge that some prisons did not have libraries at all due to financial challenges or lack of a reason to set up one (SAHRC, 1998).

### **Framework for Establishing a Prison Library in Tanzania**

According to United Nations Office for Project Services, Nuttal *et al.*, (2016) a prison library ought to consider the operational and security matters of the entire prison. Moreover, such a library must be adequately stocked with educational and recreational resources. The size of the library should depend on the size of the prison and the number of its prisoners. However, if prisoners are many then the inmates could use the library in turns at different times and by different categories of prisoners, subject to careful management oversight (Nuttal *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, prisoners who could not access the library due to illness or were housed in a segregated unit need a special dispensation to ensure they also access the library books.

Based on the current study's findings, it is apparent that a slightly different approach needs to be taken to establish libraries in the Tanzania Prison System. To begin with, a survey ought to be conducted to establish the needs of the prisoners and their opinions. Once that was established, the type of information they needed must be established to see its suitability in accordance with the prison regulations. If there are funds and space, then a library can be established but if these two elements are missing, then an alternative can be sought including linking the prison to the Tanzania Library Service Board (TLSB) so that mobile library services can be provided to the prisoners to cater for to meet their information user needs as the framework in Figure 2 illustrates:



**Fig 2: Framework for Establishing Libraries in the Tanzania Prison System**

Joseph and Olayinka (2019), who investigated the roles of library services among prison inmates' rehabilitation in selected prisons of South Western Nigeria, support the notion that public libraries and TLSB—to be exact in the context of Tanzania—can provide services to prisoners if a library is out of the question. The positive aspects augur well with the Tanzanian prison system scenario as well. The study's findings further indicate that public libraries offered services such as user education, mobile library services, reference services, Selective Dissemination of Information, Current Awareness Services, and provision of relevant literature (Joseph and Olayinka, 2019). Furthermore, the study had explored whether the services provided met the prisoners' information needs and found that, indeed, they play a significant role in meeting the information needs of the prisoners and that the information provided play a key role in prisoners' day-to-day life while in incarceration hence acquiring life skills, health information, spiritual and character reformation information and legal information.

Lehman and Locke (2005) on their part had established that IFLA's guidelines for library services to prisoners designed for librarians, prison authorities, legislative and administrative branches of the government and other agencies/authorities assist in establishing a new library or evaluating an existing library within the prison. These guidelines cover key features such as library administration, access, physical facilities and equipment, ICT, staffing, budget, library materials, services and programmes, communication and marketing as key issues that has to be considered when establishing a prison library. Many of these aspects ought to be considered in the context of Tanzania's prison system when establishing libraries.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The prison library establishment has the prospect of supporting rehabilitation programmes that the Tanzania Prison System has in place; offer opportunities for prisoners to read and gain new perspectives; but most importantly, foster reading culture and enhance behavioural change resulting in transformed inmates through ‘auto-bibliotherapy’ or healing through reading. However, financial challenges and lack of stakeholders’ involvement seems to be major impeding factors behind the failure to establish libraries in the country’s prison system. What can be done is to provide awareness to the community on the benefits that the prison and society will accrue from successfully establish libraries. Doing so could also forestall or help answer the following questions: Where would the funds come from? Where would the reading materials for the prison collection come from? And how would inmates be trained to be custodians of the library? A library ought to be established for prisoners and should that fail then alternative programmes should be in place to ensure prisoners access books and information they need. These alternative prison information delivery services could involve the Tanzania Library Service Board through mobile library services to prisoners on either on weekly or monthly bases or establishing volunteering groups that could be collecting books and sending them to the prisoners as per TPS approval. Overall, establishing libraries could be a way for prisoners to learn, to ‘escape’ and to feel less alone during their imprisonment while acquiring information and skills that could add value to the post-confinement lives.

Against this backdrop, the following recommendations could facilitate the establishing of prison libraries in the Tanzania Prison System:

As most of the prisoners wanted a library that will contain a diversified collection of information resources which accommodate their diverse need, there was a need to establish prison libraries with a plethora of information materials including fiction, non-fiction, biographies, memoirs, religious books and stories, academic books, newspapers and magazines such as news week and the economist.

Moreover, there was a need to consider accommodate time for reading, as the responding prisoners had recommended. Doing so would allow inmates have time to read and borrow books just as they do sports and religious worship.

Furthermore, as prisoners also wanted a good circulation policy to be enforced accordingly, there was a need to consider how the large number of inmates and their information needs could be accommodated. Thus, a good circulation policy could ensure that prisoners borrow and read books for a certain period while giving room for others to access the materials after they had returned them for circulation purposes.

It was also apparent that there was a need to train some inmate should be trained to serve as custodians-cum-librarians of the prison library and not leave that responsibility to a prison official. Under such a set-up, a prison official could oversee the collection and help in enforcing penalties among library defaulting prisoners.

On the administrative side, the head of prison and prison officials were generally receptive to the idea of establishing a library in the prison that could give prisoners something to aspire to. What emerged were budget challenges that did impede the library establishment. As such, there was a need for financial support from both governmental and non-governmental sources as well as educational institutions to chip in. Such support could ensure that a well-stocked library is

established to help prisoners learn while in prison and bridge the gap between the outside world and inside world behind bars.

Furthermore, as the head of prison suggested stakeholders such as educational institutions, NGOs, the Tanzania Library Service Board (TLSB) and local governments could get involved in facilitating the establishment and operation of the envisaged prison library. Their involvement could facilitate fund-raising money, as such monies are crucial in not just setting up the prison library but also keeping the library relevant to the information users—inmates—and staying up-to-date. The stakeholders could also donate library materials that could be useful in a prison library.

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