

Effect of Impeded Parenthood on Reformation of Offenders at EMBU Prison

Willis Wasonga¹, Prof. Samson WokabiMwangi (Phd)², Mr. John Omboto³

^{1.} *Department of Peace, Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Kenya*

^{2.} *Senior Lecturer, Department of Peace, Security and Social Sciences, Egerton University, Kenya*

^{3.} *Lecturer Department of Peace, Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Kenya*

Corresponding Author: Willis Wasonga

Abstract: This paper examines the effect of impeded parenthood on the reformation of offenders at Embu Prison. It was necessitated by the fact that impeded (hindered) parenthood at Embu prison has caused worries and stress which can, in turn, affect reformation of the imprisoned parents and who constitute a significant prison population. The specific objectives of the study were: to identify the parenthood challenges prisoners face during imprisonment, to assess how prisoners cope with parenthood challenges, to describe the effects of the challenges faced by prisoners on the reformation of prisoners and to examine how parenthood challenges in prison can be controlled by prison administration at Embu Prison. This study was guided by the reformative theory and rational choice theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample total of 153 inmates comprising of 133 males and 20 females was found representative but purposively a sample of 132 inmates serving long-term (more than 3 years) sentences and who have children aged below 17 and below years and five key informants were identified and selected. Interview schedule and questionnaire were the instruments for data collection. The data analysis was done with the help of Excel computer program and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences. Analysed data was presented by frequency tables and percentages. The findings of this study indicate that parenting prisoners face a lot of challenges such as stigma 87.5% from relatives their children, lack of visits by their children, lack of parental control over their children and victimization of their children. Analysis of the coping mechanisms of imprisoned parents indicated that they try to be good parents 95.2%, counseling their children, and attending religious gatherings. The study found out that prison challenges resulted in stress and worries among imprisoned parents which had adverse effects on their reformation. The study concluded that strategies for controlling parenthood challenges by the prison administration which were found to be; regular visits by prisoners' children, allowing frequent prison visits, more but controlled phone calls by inmates and parenting programs would facilitate reformation imprisoned parents. This study, therefore, recommends for more reformation programs to be introduced at the prison. Also, an environment where reformation would easily acceptable to the imprisoned parents needs to be created as part of the initiatives of the larger spectrum of reformation.

Keywords: Impeded parenthood; imprisoned parents; parenthood challenges; stress and worries; reformation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study sought to explore the effect of impeded parenthood on the reformation of offenders at Embu Prison. This study was informed by the situation where prisoners who are parents and who as a result of their imprisonment have not been able to provide for their children due to hindered parenting enforced by the prison walls. Furthermore, these parents are never frequently visited even by their children due to reasons that are specific to every imprisoned parent at Embu prison. This situation has made these parents to worry a lot about their children, a factor that may hinder their reformation.

The punishment for those who go against the norms in the society has changed from worse in the ancient times where there was an 'eye for an eye' to the modern penalty like imprisonment. In most countries today, the worst sentence like death penalty Mushanga (1976), is being commuted with a life sentence. Before this, death sentence and other harsh forms of punishments like corporal punishment were used as a penalty meted out on offenders and even today by some countries. However, the feeling of humanness has made a lot of impact on how offenders all over the world are treated by the criminal justice system today.

Norway is one of the countries that has developed prisons humanely which has resulted to low recidivism rate compared to many developed countries (Dreisinger, 2017; Mallinder, 2015). This is one example

among the many that have informed reform efforts in the prison, where the welfare of prisoners is increasingly being taken into consideration. This, in the long run, enhances the individual dignity of the inmates, a factor which is crucial in their personal reformation processes. This humanness in the context of facilitating parenting among the prisoners at Embu prison is the gap that this study is seeking to fill. In a bid to reform the prisoners at Embu prison, a lot of efforts that include vocational training at the institution which would go a long way in equipping the prisoners with skills that would enable them to eke a living thereby not recidivating to earn a living.

The prison performs the role of deterring offenders from committing more crimes in the society. They punish the offenders by curtailing some of their rights, incapacitate them by separating them from the public where they are free and rehabilitate them through counseling and training. However, experiences have shown that imprisonment as a punishment has provided environments where the prisoners perfect their criminality rather than being rehabilitated. This fact justifies a closer look at some of the probable causes of this situation, as a factor like 'impeded parenthood' may also exacerbate this situation. Most of the offenders at the prison are parents who have children and other dependents they fended for in their families prior to imprisonment. Upon their imprisonment, a lot of challenges start in the family that more often affects the rehabilitation processes of the parenting offenders both within the prison and outside the prison. Although prisons world over have been enabling and on the other hand controlling parenting among inmates, parenthood among prisoners is still dogged with many challenges (Jensen & DuDeck-Biondo, 2005). One such parenthood challenge is impeded parenthood at the prison where many inmates have become victims of.

Family connections are important since they give people a sense of belonging, safety, identity, and comfort. This is also true for the prisoners since family relationships can influence the reformation process of the prisoners by providing a safe reentry from prison through aiding the ex-convicts monetarily and helping them to get jobs. It is only through strong family ties between the parent prisoners and their families, that their children are taken care of and given security which may give peace to the affected prisoners hence impacting their reformation positively.

Studies have shown that prisoners who have been visited are less likely to re-offend a year after release (May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). Moreover, sustained relationships between the family and the inmate help to diffuse the tensions in the relationships lower the risk of disruption and ensure prisoner's effective reentry into the family and society. In this situation, parenthood is crucial in that it may create an important status of personality that substitutes offender status (Meek, 2011). Parenthood then turns into an important reason which accounts for what motivated the offenders and why they have reformed.

Most often, the social impact of imprisonment can be too damaging especially on children and on its role in propagating inequity (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011). Shame and stigma associated with the imprisonment of a parent or any other member of the family have always caused such families to hide their predicament. Furthermore, ex-convicts are mostly rejected socially with very few people ready to help or associate with them. According to Fritsch and Burkhead (1981), children of the imprisoned parents rarely receive sympathy from the society unlike children facing other different forms of separation from their parents like death, divorce, separation or hospitalization. In this situation, the imprisoned parents may get overwhelmed by worries about the hardships that their children face as a result of their own sins and turn to drug abuse as a coping mechanism while still in prison, thus hindering their reformation process.

On the contrary, the social identity that parenthood imparts to offenders with children gives them a resilient commitment to shared objectives and optimism about the future. They tend to have reduced recidivism tendencies (Maruna, 2001). This situation can only be attributed to imprisoned parents at the correctional institutions where there are effective parenting-oriented programs which lack in many prisons. According to Shama and Kochal (2008), some incarcerated mothers derive their hope for continued existence from their parenthood, which helps them to lessen the negative effects of being inmates on their parenthood and children. This shows why the lack of contact or inadequate contact between imprisoned parents and their children can have such a negative impact on the reformation of such prisoners.

In the United States, an alarming statistic from the Department of Justice in 2005 showed that the ratio of the prisoners to those not imprisoned was 1 to 136 (Harrison & Beck, 2006). With the growth of the prison populations, more children are continually condemned to grappling with and suffering the unintended consequences of their parents' sins and parental imprisonment. Some of the challenges that children face due to parents' imprisonment include difficulties in school, stress and behavioral hitches (Reed & Reed, 1997). For such children, the situation increases their chances of later coming into contact with the criminal justice system (Will, Chiney & Easterling, 2005). The knowledge of the children's suffering outside the prison also affects their imprisoned parents. As a result, this situation, in the long run, may affect the reformation of these inmates.

In another study in the US, the number of children who were experiencing parental imprisonment in the period between 2011 and 2012 alone was 5.1 million (Cassey Foundation, 2016). In cases where a mother is imprisoned, her removal from the family and from the life of her child always seriously disturbs the life of the

imprisoned mother so much. This is because of the role of motherhood and the societal expectation of women according to how they should behave in the society. Conversely, the paternal removal from the family where in most times fathers do not live with their children prior to the imprisonment or leave their wives behind to care for the children. Due to hindered motherhood, the worries about the welfare of their children are compounded. To enable effective reformation, mothers may need more contact with their children while in prison like Embu which would, in the long run, help the prison itself in its reformation agenda.

A study on children who saw their parents arrested and consequently imprisoned in South Africa revealed that these children exhibited general abhorrence to security authorities, aggressive behaviors, insecure feelings, and sleeplessness (Skinner & Swartz, 1989). This situation is further complicated by lack of proper parenting programs in place in the prisons to aid parents whose parenthood is restricted within the prison walls to reach out to their children. This is because most times contacts between the children and parents are limited. The problem with this scenario is also the psychological impact that such arrest may have on the affected parents in prisons, as this may add to more stress and worry. Consequently, it may hinder their reformation due to impeded parenthood.

The core role of the criminal justice system is to control crime and to punish the offenders. In so doing the Kenyan criminal justice system has been sending many offenders to prison in an effort to promote justice in different communities and the country at large. According to statistics from the Kenya Prisons Service, the prison population has been increasing. By 2016, the prison population had grown by almost seventeen thousand inmates, bringing this number to 57,000, with a significant proportion of this being parents (World Prison Brief, 2016). In spite of this reality, the Kenyan criminal justice system seems to ignore the effect that their dealing with parenting adult offenders has on the reformation efforts. Embu prison is one of the prisons in Kenya where most prisoners are parents who leave their children behind on incarceration. Just as any imprisoned loving parent may worry about their children's welfare, these parents at Embu prison also face a similar situation which can hinder their reformation processes and therefore informs a study on such situation. Thus, this study sought to shed light on the possible effect that impeded parenthood may have on the reformation of offenders at Embu prison.

Statement of the Problem

One of the basic objectives of imprisonment is the reformation of the prisoners. It is hoped that when prisoners have been imprisoned, they would be trained in all important skills that would enable them to earn a living after release from prison without recidivating and even live crime-free life within the prison walls. However, the fact that most of the inmates at Embu prison are parents with parental obligations to fulfill makes it hard for these inmates to adjust to the worries about their children, a factor that may greatly affect their reformation process. This is because active parenting and parental responsibility have been known to prevent individuals in the society from engaging in criminal activities as it would bring them into conflict with the criminal justice system and eventually land them in jail. Moreover, parents who have invested in their children would not want to lose their children by engaging in risky actions that would land them in prison. Thus, reformation effort on inmates who are parents without attempts to improve their parenting abilities and contact with their children may affect their reformation as is the case at Embu prison. In response to this problem, this study proposed to explore the effect of impeded parenthood on the reformation of offenders at Embu prison.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to establish the effect of impeded parenthood on the reformation of offenders at Embu prison.

Justification of the Study

The study is important in that many parents face extreme conditions more so due to the feelings of the sufferings of their children at home. Since prisons are corrective institutions, incarcerated parents should reform and be rehabilitated yet some of them resort to even more anti-social behavior like drug abuse simply to quell the intensive thinking about their children. This may affect their willingness and readiness to change their unwanted behavior. The study was important in informing policy formulation and guiding practice in the judicial and justice systems. Firstly, the study would bring to light the impacts of the impeded parenthood on the rehabilitation of inmates and make the recommendation on programmes and policies for addressing them. Secondly, it hoped the study would provide officers in the criminal justice system with the knowledge necessary for the proactive crime prevention by mitigating negative effects of imprisonment on parents. Thirdly, it is expected to provide vast information to policymakers on reformation of parent offenders in the correctional institutions in Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting while in jail for a loving mother or father cannot be an easy endeavor for someone who would want to do so because of the prison environment (Miller, 2008). The presence of parents in their families ensures the much-needed parent-child bond that ensures healthy development between both parents and their children whom they fend for. Also, important to note is the fact that researchers have strongly associated parental incarceration with deep trans-generational effects, one of them being offending (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Most children of the incarcerated go through a lot of difficulties during the period when their parents are serving their time in prison. In countries where governments do not have foster care centers for such disadvantaged children, their plight is always compounded. Moreover, parents play the important role in the intergenerational transmission of childrearing skills and culture to their children which is consequently badly disrupted by parental imprisonment (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013). In the US, for instance, due to mass imprisonment, it is estimated that every, one (1) in forty-three (43) children are facing parental incarceration (Clear 2008; Maruschak, Glaze & Mumola, 2010). This shows how much the society is facing the effects of imprisonment. Without parents to look after them, these children are seriously affected by the forced absence of parents in their lives. And as long as children of the prisoners continue to suffer, their parents too are bound to suffer the consequence of their restricted parenthood. Such children, out of their disadvantaged situation, may turn to crimes like drug abuse to cope with the absence of their parents or stealing so as to eke out a living.

Other consequences that may impact on imprisoned parent include sicknesses or even death of children from preventable causes. The reformation efforts for parents whose children are having contact with the criminal justice system can thus be hampered by such unintended eventualities. This is because of the resultant worries that would not give such parents peace essential for their reformation. At Embu prison, the parent prisoners are also faced with the same predicament, hence, there is a need for exploring its effect on the affected inmates. This study found out that some of the inmates are so much stressed and worried about their children. This is because some of their children have turned to criminal activities like stealing so as to eke a living, factor that negatively affects the reformation processes of such inmates.

The significance of parent-child relations to the child's welfare and child development systems is imperative. Studies have shown that every individual in the family is swayed by their connections within and without especially in the context of sociocultural systems (Parke 2002; Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Fathers contribute to the lives of their children by being available and present, interacting directly with them and are responsible for their children's needs (Lamb et al., 1987). International studies have lent credence to the importance of father's involvement in the life of their children by showing that in as much as they do not do the caregiving work of their children unlike mothers, they spend much time playing with them (Parke, 2002). This kind of interaction aids in the formation of emotional regulation, social ability, and safe attachment of children (Pleck, 2007). Consequently, this can help in excluding detrimental behaviors in parents that would result in their imprisonment.

However, Snarey (1993) notes that these distinctive contributions are always ignored by measures that concentrate singly on time used up on child upkeep undertakings. The imprisonment of a parent, therefore, impedes their involvement in the life of children, like the father's contact through play. This situation is always worsened by the length of the sentence or by the recidivism of the parent (Maruschak et al., 2010). As such, long sentences or recidivism results in a situation where parents go through long-term worries or resign to the fate of recidivism as a career criminal. If this becomes the case, the reformation of such prisoners becomes a big challenge and an important factor that informs this study. This study found that fathers in prison miss the quality interactive time with their children. Some of them remarked that such absence from the lives of their children gives them stress and worries that in turn negatively affects their reformation.

According to Parke (2002), the value of the prisoner's relationship with their parent especially men also determines their relationship through involvement with their own children. This underscores the argument put forward by the Bandura's social learning theory by postulating that fathers learn to father from their fathers, thus, become like their fathers (Bandura, 1989). Conversely, some parents who went through the negative experiences in childhood because of the poor parenting can modify the idea of fatherhood so as to recompense for the lacks they faced in their childhood (Parke, 2002). The capability of these parents to be engaged in the lives of their children can likewise touch their prospects for a generativity-psychosocial stage in life that entails caring for others, together with succeeding generations (Erikson, 1998). This idea of generativity was then stretched by Snarey (1993) by coming up with four stages of generativity which include birth fathers (biological generativity), childrearing fathers (parental generativity), and cultural fathers (societal generativity). In his forty years' study of 240 fathers, Snarey (1993) established that parental generativity (partaking in the rearing of a child) resulted in men's societal generativity. Societal generativity means caring and enabling progress in other adults through supporting, mentoring, and leadership at the personal, and community level. In the context of the impeded parenthood, especially fathers, their chances of continuing interaction with their children are always so

much narrowed. As a result, this situation, in turn, impacts negatively on their sense of identity and self-worth in the realm of their parenthood, parental generativity and in the long run, parent's capability to becoming generative societally (Halsey & Harris, 2011). Inability to become generative basically impedes the reformation process of the parent prisoners whose parental generativity is an important factor. This fact further explains why the introduction of parenting programs in prisons becomes imperative in helping the criminal justice system to curb recidivism among the offenders. The study found that the inability of the inmates to care for their children because of their imprisonment results in their feeling of uselessness. This kind of a person cannot care about the consequences of his or her actions even if such action is criminal in nature. There lies the danger to the society. Parents also face stigma due to imprisonment. For instance, in women, the aberration from the societal roles as mothers that are occasioned by their imprisonment has been pinpointed as the cause. Stigma is experienced differently depending on a person's gender. Thus, women or mothers in prison grapple with more stigma than fathers due to the separation from their children. This is attributed to the perception of mothers as the children nurturers because of the ideals of power and because mothers are the primary caregivers of their children prior to their imprisonment. Furthermore, labeled principles of motherhood increase the stigma in mothers unlike fathers (Morash&Schram, 2002). The stigmatization may in the long impact on the reformation of these parent prisoners negatively since it can more often than not cause a lot of worry and stress. Worries and stress if not well managed, end up defeating the imperative goal of imprisonment such as reformation of parent prisoners. This study found that parent prisoners face stigma and this affects their reformation.

During the period of the prison sentence, parents lose their parenthood identity and temporarily assume a prisoner identity so as to cope with the prison environment. This happens with the hope that he or she will return to the suspended parenthood identity especially for fathers or mothers who do not live with their children in prison. Studies have shown that the prison experience is gendered with women facing more stigma than men. The key causes of this stigmatization are the general judgment of women in prison as being inadequate, unfit, heartless and subpar according to the societal standard of motherhood (Kauffman, 2001). Stigma may bring more problems to these mothers such as low self-esteem, which can hinder the reformation of the prisoners whose very parenthood is already impeded.

Many caring parents in the prison find it hard to make decisions about the future of their children. The communication between parents and their children's caretaker is often irregular and stressed, which in turn hinders the parental role such as being responsible for the important aspects of the lives of their children. So, the prison environment, militate against parents by hindering them from retaining their authority as parents; communication problems; illiteracy; and ignorance of their need for involvement in the lives of their children are also obstacles to that authority (Beckerman, 1994). Authority forms an important aspect of child rearing in that helps in the directing of one's child towards the right direction concerning his or her future. Authority is best achieved in close contacts unlike the exercise of it at a distance. This study found that there is a lack of adequate communication between parents and their children. However, most inmates suggested that they should be allowed to make the frequent phone so as to maintain their presence in the lives of their children. Moreover, some said that communication through the phone calls would afford them the opportunity to advise their children on the important matters of life.

In the African context children used to belong to the community and as such it was everyone's responsibility in ensuring that a child's basic needs are catered for and their character molded according to the societal norms (Adinlofu, 2009). In such environments, the effects of parent-child separation on children of whatever form could be cushioned by the communities where such children came from. This benefitted the children themselves and to a larger extent, the parents of the child especially where the separation is not as a result of the death of any of the parents. Thus, in the case of imprisonment, the children of the prisoner could still be cared for and this would lessen the worry of the convicted parent. However, with the changing culture of communal child responsibility to individual child responsibility, an imprisoned parent who loves his or her child will be forced to sink into worry about his or her child or children's wellbeing. This is in harmony with the report of Penal Reform International (PRI), (2015) about the children of the imprisoned parents which found out that they face a lot of violations as a result of their parent's imprisonment. This knowledge on the part of their loving parents and whose parenthood is impeded would only negatively impact on their reformation processes as this situation exacerbates worries and stress. In Kenya, imprisoned parents still face the challenges of the impeded parenthood since the programs that are directed towards enabling parenting while in prison are currently almost unavailable. This is the dearth which informs the study in Embu GK prison as it is one area where a wealth of data can be gathered about the study problem.

Existing literature outlines various challenges but it is not clear how each of these challenges influences or may influence the reformation of the inmates. The absence of both parents and children from each other, victimization and even stigmatization have could be having different and specific effects on reformation. This is a gap that this study anticipated to fill. This study found out that most of the challenges listed above such victimization, stigmatization, lack of communication, and lack of physical contact between the parents and their

children has negative impacts on their reformation.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is based on the Reformatory Theory and Rational Choice Theory. **Reformatory Theory** was first advanced by Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. The theory postulates that punishment should be aimed at changing the character of the offender. Thus, the punishment should be for the reformation of the offender (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). This theory focuses on the criminal instead of the crime and seeks to bring the attitudinal change in the perception of the offender thereby rehabilitate him or her. The reformatory theory emerged after attempts to reduce crime through deterrent and retributive theories failed.

According to this theory, crime is determined by the existence of physical and emotional characteristics of the offenders and with environment and situation of the society. It emphasizes that the criminal is not born but made by the environment in the society where he or she lives. Therefore, the offender is treated as a patient and not as a lawbreaker and that every society has the responsibility to reform the offender. The sentence should be used as a strategy to rescue an offender and not to do more harm to the criminal and any type of corporal punishment against the offender is condemned by the theory (Salmond, 2008). Also, the proponents of this theory advocate that the judge must take into consideration the age and character of the criminal, situation that prompted the act and the motive behind it while giving a punishment. Only taking the prior mentioned perspectives would make the judge give out an impartial and justifiable verdict in a particular case.

Imprisonment should be aimed at bringing a change in the offender's psychological perception through useful measures during their imprisonment and not only incapacitation or deterrence. It is pegged on the view that loving, kind and careful handling of offenders can result in a radical transformation in their characters. It firmly opposes capital punishment since hanging is a revelation that humans are unable to reform their fellow men. This theory has proved imperative in the rehabilitation of the first offenders and juvenile delinquents.

In the context of criminal justice, imprisonment has been used as a painful means of punishing offenders for the greater good of the society. Under the reformation theory, punishment serves the purpose of rehabilitation/reformation (Robinson, 2001). Reformation as a basis of imprisonment is aimed at preventing future reoffending by providing the inmates with vocational training and other educational programs such as parenting programs. As a result, inmates become equipped to face life in the society and even compete in the job market. Thus, reformation of offenders produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number when ex-prisoners return to their communities and do not re-offend (Flynn, 2011).

The application of this theory in this study helps in understanding how impeded parenthood by the criminal justice system within the prison setting impacts the reformation of the incarcerated parents in Embu GK prison. In an effort to respond to the problem facing reformation of imprisoned parents, parenting programmes among others have been introduced in the prison institutions so as to ensure effective reformation of the offenders. According to Carlson (2009) and Rowland and Watts (2007), mothers who participate in the attachment parenting programmes have a low rate of reoffending as compared to those who do not undergo such programmes.

Moreover, Loper and Tuerk (2010) found that parenting programmes that concentrated on mental-behavioral mechanisms in decreasing emotional reactions to traumatic conditions of inmates by providing parenting education (like techniques of communication with their children and caregivers of their children) to participants consequently reduced parenting worries and stress by the fact that it increased the vital contact between imprisoned parents and their children and children's caretakers. Stress reduction by such programmes in such group of people is important in that it goes a long way to improve the reformation initiatives by the correctional institutions. This is because experiences have pointed to inmates resorting to drugs and substance abuse so as to try to cope with stressful situations in prisons. Additionally, studies have linked social generativity with parental generativity which has been associated with reduced reoffending among fathers. This is because their key motivation was to provide for their children which were jeopardized by their engagement in crime (Walker, 2010 & Peterson, 2006). Therefore, when such programs are introduced at the Embu GK prison, the reformation of the imprisoned parents will be possible.

This theory is mainly based on the efforts of the prison to ensure or to bring about the reform agenda on the prisoner. However, it is important to note that the success of such initiatives depends on the prisoners themselves to either accept or reject reformation. The reformatory theory fails to recognize the individual's rational choices to reform, therefore, there is need include another theory explained below.

Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is an approach to the explanation of (deviance and conformity) the preferences made by the self-interested individuals. It first originated with the works of Cesare Beccaria in the 18th century. In criminology, RCT assumes a utilitarian belief that an individual is a rational or a perceptive actor who assesses the cost and benefits, means and ends. This was a method proposed by Clarke (1997) to

assist in discerning about circumstantial lawbreaking.

The rational choice theory assumes that individuals are rational and make their decisions in consideration to what is best for them with regard to achieving their goals (Clarke, 1997). Moreover, it assumes that individuals are goal focused and purposive in relation to the actions that they take. Thus, it is notable that in RCT, people are driven by goals that show their preferences. Individuals act within explicit, implicit constraints and the basis of the information they are acting on. They must decide on the goals they want to achieve and the means of achieving such goals.

In the context of this study, imprisoned parents have to make rational choices on the cost and benefits of the reformation so as to either accept or reject it. Besides, the reformation efforts of the prisoners by the prison are purely dependent on the rational choice of the prisoner to accept to reform as it cannot be forced. Therefore, in a prison setting and with all the reform efforts, the success of offender reformation is absolutely pegged on the prisoner alone. This is based on the information they are given about reformation and their choices.

The application of this theory in the study helps in understanding how imprisoned parents have the sole power to make their reformations in prisons successful. This means that the prison can make the best of its efforts in regards to reforming the offender but the ultimate decision to reform is with the prisoner alone. The prisoner, therefore, must be able to clearly see the need and the benefit of such reforms to himself or herself so as to accept them.

The Reformatory Theory and the Rational Choice Theory are both important in understanding the success of the reformation in the prison context. While Reformatory Theory focusses on the efforts put by the prison to ensure that it achieves its goals, Rational Choice Theory focusses on the prisoner who has the power of choice to accept reform. Therefore, the two theories play a complementary role in explaining the whole spectrum of the reformation of the offenders in prison.

Methodology

This paper is centered on the study that was carried out at Embu prison, Kenya. This study used a descriptive survey design. The design is preferred where subjects respond to a series of questions or statements in a questionnaire or interview (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). According to Orodho (2003), the descriptive survey is ideal for gathering information concerning people's attitudes, opinions, views and diverse of social issues. The design was very vital especially in exploring the perception of the incarcerated parents on how their impeded parenthood affects their reformation in Embu prison. The design is also preferred where the standard questions which elicit standardized responses are used (Levine & Gelles, 1999). The use of this design, hence, helped in the accurate and precise understanding of results. The constructivists' school of thought philosophical stance guided the study. The population of the study included fathers and mothers in prison whose parenthood has been affected by the long-term imprisonment. Currently, as per the Embu prison statistics the total population is 1096, with 1055 being male and 41 being female prisoners. Out of this are long-term prisoners, who are parents who have served at least 3 years and above and have children who are 17 years of age and below. This includes 458 fathers and 22 mothers. In total, the target population is 480 incarcerated parents.

Data Analysis

The collected narrative data were analyzed thematically. Content analyses of the emerging themes were fed to Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Excel computer program. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, was also computed and presented in frequency tables.

Ethical Considerations

The entire study process was conducted with due respect to ethical considerations in research. The researcher obtained authorization from Graduate School and research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovations (NACOSTI). Permission was also obtained from the commissioner general of the Kenya Prison Service. Informed consent of the imprisoned parents as the respondents who participated in the study was also secured. There was total avoidance of actions and questions that could cause psychological harm to respondents. Asking embarrassing or irrelevant questions and using threatening language or making respondents uneasy was not applied at all. Respondents' views were also treated with utmost confidentiality. In general, a high degree of openness regarding the purpose and the nature of the study was observed in the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate the various challenges of impeded parenthood that affect prisoners' reformation. On challenges faced by parenting prisoners, the majority of them indicated that they are not visited by their children (42.4%). This shows that most of the prisoners at Embu prison are not visited which may have resulted in their worries about their children. Prison visits are meant to help inmates and especially parents to fulfill their parenting roles despite being behind the prison walls. This in turn aids in the reformation of inmates who are parents to respond well to the reform agenda of the prison. One imprisoned parent remarked,

Excerpt No 1

"...naadhibiwakwasababuyakuvunjasherialakinipiamaafandewanajanajaribukuturekebisha. Mimi binafsinikonastresskwasababukwamiakatanosasisijawaonawatotowanguwalasijuiwanavyoendelea. Kuna hajaganiyakuwamzurikamahaunamaanakwafamilyakonabibiyangukutorokabaadayakufungwa." ... (I am imprisoned because of crime but the warders are also trying to reform us. Personally, am stressed because for five years I have not seen my children and I don't know about how they are faring on. Why be good when you are worthless to your family and my wife went away after my imprisonment).

The result of this study concurs with literature which notes that for imprisoned parents, parent-child contact can play such an important role in their reformation and that is why parent-child contact may be encouraged while the prisoner is still in prison (Brooks, 1994). Additionally, Snarey (1993) established that parental generativity (partaking in the rearing of the child) resulted in men's societal generativity. Societal generativity means caring and enabling progress in other adults through supporting, mentoring, and leadership at the personal, and community level. In the context of the imprisoned parenthood, especially fathers, their chances of continuing interaction with their children are always so much narrowed. As a result, this situation, in turn, impacts negatively on their sense of identity and self-worth in the realm of their parenthood, parental generativity and in the long run, parent's capability to becoming generative societally (Halsey & Harris, 2011). Inability to become generative basically impedes the reformation process of the parent prisoners whose parental generativity is an important factor. This fact further explains why the introduction of parenting programs in prisons becomes imperative in helping the criminal justice system to curb recidivism among the offenders.

Most of the prisoners get stigmatized by their children, spouse and other family members for being imprisoned. Most of them are never told how their children are faring on, comprising 45.2%. This is followed by another proportion who face stigma and whose children are never taken to prison to visit them (35.7%). Few prisoners (19%) show that they face stigma but do not know how it is manifested in them. These findings are showing that majority of the prisoners at Embu prison (45.2%) are stigmatized/ dishonored by their relatives including their children and that is why they are never told/informed about the welfare of their children by relatives. The 35.7% are stigmatized by having their children not allowed by relatives to visit them in prison. These are big challenges that affect them in in prison. One respondent observed that;

Excerpt No 2

"...Miotowanguanatusiwakuwanimhalifukamamake." ... (my child is being abused that he is criminal like his mother).

Majority of the prisoners who indicate faced stigma from relatives (83.3%) indicate that they do not also know the nature of the stigma faced by their children, other relatives, and spouses. In this case, therefore, most of the prisoners face stigma from their relatives, their children, and spouses. These findings are in support of empirical studies noting that, parents also face stigma due to imprisonment. For instance, women's aberration from the societal roles as mothers that are occasioned by their imprisonment has been pinpointed as the cause. Stigma is experienced differently depending on a person's gender. Mothers in prison grapple with more stigma than fathers due to the separation from their children. Labeled principles of motherhood increase the stigma in mothers unlike fathers (Morash&Schram, 2002). More studies show that the prison experience is gendered with women facing more stigma than men. The key causes of this stigmatization are the general judgment of women in prison as being inadequate, unfit, heartless and subpar according to the societal standard of motherhood. Stigma may bring more problems to these mothers such as low self-esteem, which can hinder the rehabilitation of the prisoners whose very parenthood is already impeded (Kauffman, 2001).

Majority of the prisoners know they do not have control of their children, in prison (76%). The prisoners who indicated they have no control and would like to change/improve the situation by being set free are the majority (52.6%). Those who show no control and would like to get more children visits in prison are 28.9%. Small proportions know they do not have control of their children but also know it is not possible to have a solution at the moment (18.4%). These findings indicate that the majority of the prisoners know they do not have control of their children (76%). These findings are corroborated in the literature review. This situation of imprisonment

may affect the reformation process of a parenting inmate. Additionally, the distressing prison environment itself must be one of the hardest and most traumatizing situations that a loving parent would endure. Parenting while in jail for a loving parent cannot be an easy endeavor because of the prison environment (Miller, 2008). One male respondent said;

Excerpt No 3

“...It is impossible for me to control their behavior since they are away and don't even visit me. Also, I cannot reach them even through phone calls because they don't have a phone at home.”

The prison environment, militate against parents by hindering them from retaining their authority as parents; communication problems; illiteracy and ignorance of their need for involvement in the lives of their children are also obstacles to that authority (Beckerman, 1994).Lack of prisoners' parental control on their children negatively impacts their parental generativity, which in turn negatively affects their reformation (Halsey & Harris, 2011).

When asked if their absence from home negatively affects their children. Majority of the prisoners (93.01%) gave a Yes answer. Most of the Yes category answers indicate that this affects their children since they cannot take care of them and their properties anymore, and that their children are affected since they may not have the best education should be getting. For instance, one of the key informants remarked that;

Excerpt No 4

“...the prisoners' children are affected so much so that there are cases where the children of the prisoners who are left back at home are forced even to steal food or engage in illegal activities to eke a living. This situation results in a lot of worries on the affected inmates; this consequently negatively affects their reformation process.”

(Source: Female key informant, Welfare Officer at Embu women prison, 2018)

This is in concurrence with the Maruschak, Glaze & Mumola (2010) who note that without parents to look after them, these children are seriously affected in their lives. And as long as children of the prisoners continue to suffer, their parents too are bound to suffer the consequence of their restricted parenthood. Such children, out of their disadvantaged situation, may turn to crimes. Fathers contribute to the lives of their children by being available and present, interacting directly with them and are responsible for their children's needs (Lamb et al., 1987). International studies have lent credence to the importance of father's involvement in the life of their children by showing that in as much as they do not do the caregiving work of their children unlike mothers, they spend much time with them (Parke, 2002).

Moreover, a study done by Maruschak et al., (2010) showed that the imprisonment of a parent, impedes their involvement in the life of their children, like the father's contact through play. This situation is always worsened by the length of the sentence or by the recidivism of the parent. Consequently, parent prisoners' absence from home negatively affects children, which subsequently negatively impacts their parental generativity, which in turn negatively affects their reformation (Halsey & Harris, 2011).

When asked whether their absence resulted in the victimization of their children, a majority of them (91.07%) indicated Yes. A proportion of 25% indicates their children are victimized in many diverse ways. Out of the total responses received, 16.07% have their children abused, 10.71% are given inadequate food and other basic needs satisfaction, 5.36% have their children overworked, 3.57% are getting a poor education as few show that they have their children in with them in prison (1.79%). The prisoners who indicated that their children are not victimized comprise 8.93%. Victimization of the children of the prisoners also resulted in the stress and worries among the imprisoned parents that in turn affected their reformation negatively.

When asked about how their children have reacted to stigmatization, a majority (87.9%) indicated that their children have been stigmatized. Within this category of yes, 49% indicated that their children react to stigmatization by feeling stressed, 33.3% have their children remain quiet and feel stressed as 15.7% do not know how their children react to stigmatization. A paltry 2.0% have had their children become disobedient to their caregivers at home. This indicates that being a prisoner has made their children to be stigmatized (87.9%) and even their children's ways of reacting are also a big challenge to them as incarcerated parents. This had initially not been covered in the available literature, though Lamb et al., (1987) note that separation and dishonor may lead them to crimes and drug abuse. These reactions of the children of the prisoners have the ripple effect of worry and stress on the imprisoned parents that in turn negatively affect their reformation.

Majority 106(80.3%) of the respondents indicated that their child's/children's absence negatively impacted on their reformation process. This indicates that as children continue to be kept away, prisoners' reformation and improvement is impacted upon negatively. Moreover, poor parental relationship of prisoners

with their children and lack of control over them is making the prisoners be stressed (57.7%), be worried about children's wellbeing always (33.33%) and always being worried about their children's whereabouts (8.8%).

These findings concur with reviewed literature noting that, for the imprisoned parents, parent-child contact can play such an important role in their reformation and that is why parent-child contact may be encouraged with regard to the prisoners (Brooks, 1994). One respondent observed;

Excerpt No 5

“...I have observed through long-term engagement with these female inmates that those had their children with them had fewer worries and are easier to rehabilitate than those with young children left at home. Still, most of these mothers with children at home are rarely visited by their children.”

(Source: Female key informant, Welfare Officer at Embu women prison, 2018)

Out of the 106 who said their child's/ children's absence negatively affected their reformation, 66(62.3%) of them reported that they always thought about their child's/ children's more than anything else, 32(30.2%) of them reported that they were always stressed by their child's/ children's absence, 2(1.9%) reported that they contemplated escaping owing to their child's/ children's absence while 6(5.7%) of them did not give a response. One respondent observed;

Excerpt No 6

“...it is challenging to reform a prisoner who loved his or her children yet he or she is separated for a long time from his or her children due to imprisonment. This is due to the fact that some of these imprisoned develop the feeling of worthlessness, while some become so much stressed. Consequently, some of these affected inmates develop resistance to reformation efforts and recidivate even within the prison or immediately after release from prison.”

(Source: Male key informant, Welfare Officer at Embu male prison, 2018)

It is noteworthy from the literature that parental separation from their children hampers prisoners' achievement of their duties as parents which is against the very core aim of reformation. Prison's environment with its restrictive rules guiding the inmate's contact with his or her children and family, increases the possibility of future offending upon the prisoner's release from the prison (Arditti, 2012). Prisoners, when separated from their families, become detached from their duties and then at worst being socialized into the life of a prisoner and offending becomes normalized. With this fact in mind, one has to think that making sure that there is regular parental contact with their kids through visits would help realize the correctional goal of prisons (Brooks, 1994). Poor parenting caused by impeded parenthood of the prisoners in the long run negatively impacts on the reformation efforts of the affected prisoners (Celinska& Siegel, 2010).

V. SUMMARY

The parenthood challenges according to the findings of this study were: lack of adequate visits by their children; prisoners' stigmatization by their children; lack of the parental control over their children; inability to provide for their children due to their imprisonment; and lack of regular communication with their children through phone calls.

The study indicated that lack of adequate visits by prisoners' children made prisoners sink into worry and stress. Stigmatization of imprisoned parents by their children also contributed to their stress and worry. The study also showed that the imprisoned parents' lack of control over their children resulted in the prisoners' worry and stress that negatively impacted on their reformation.

The study also found out that prisoner lacks regular contact with their children through phone calls adversely affected the prisoners through stress and worry. This is because such a situation means that the imprisoned parent could not talk to their children about important issues such as their general welfare.

The study also indicated that prisoners' absence from their children negatively affects their reformation. This is because the imprisoned parents are not able to adequately provide for their children which consequently results in the suffering of their children. The knowledge of the suffering of their (imprisoned parents') children, in turn, gave them stress and worry. The worry and stress subsequently impact the reformation of the imprisoned parents negatively since they lose interest in such reformation efforts.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

a) Theoretical Conclusions

This study was guided by two theories, the Reformatory Theory which informed the study by explaining that a criminal is not born but made by the environment in the society where he or she lives. Therefore, the imprisoned parents should be treated as patients and not as a lawbreaker and that every prison has

the responsibility to reform the offenders such as the imprisoned parents. Rational Choice Theory which informed the study by the rational decisions that both the prison's administration and the inmate have to make for the sake of ensuring that the reformation efforts are a success. The study concluded that there is a need for the prison to adopt more reformation strategies and programs to ensure effective reformation of the imprisoned parents. An instance of such programs is the 'Malaki Dads Program' at Embu prison and to aggressively implement Remote Parenting and Open Days innovation of the Kenya Prison Service department. Concerning the rational choice theory, it postulates that individuals make rational decisions based on information they have because they are rational beings. This study, in addition, concludes that the prison administration needs to put more efforts on sensitizing the prisoners with the importance of reformation to allow them to make rational decisions about it.

b) Empirical Conclusions

Study findings have indicated that the parenting prisoners are facing myriad impeded parenting challenges. It is thus concluded that impeded parenting has brought about the parent and the children separation and absence. This situation is impeding the imprisoned parents' reformation which is one of the most important aims of the imprisonment. However, it should be noted that not all parents are good at or love their families so much so that their absence from their family would negatively impact on their reformation. Again, due to this lack of parent-child contact, prisoners and their children face victimization and stigmatization which is causing a lot of stress and mental torture to the prisoners. Parents keep thinking about the welfare and wellbeing of their children under the caregivers. The children are also equally stressed since their loved parents are absent to offer comfort and care as expected. So, the study suggests that this cannot allow parents to go through their reformation process properly due to the resultant mental torture. Nevertheless, this also is dependent on whether the individual parenting prisoner loves and cares about the welfare of his or her child or children. Moreover, the reformative programs that have been suggested in this study are dependent on both external factors and the internal factors. External factors entail the family factors like the availability of money to cater for fares to and from prison and the societal factors like perception on prisoners. Internal factors entail the availability of the resources to implement such programs and the willingness of the individual prisoner to reform.

Recommendations

Grounded on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

- i. It is recommended that the correctional facilities should have policies to allow frequent parent-children contacts in prison. This would allow some mental satisfaction and well-facilitated willingness to transform. Although there are government policies to release prisoners who are left with very short sentences to serve and those considered fully transformed, parents should be considered a lot more. Such policies and enactment should look into inmates who are parents so as to facilitate the growth of their children as responsible citizens who would not grow with bitterness and become criminals too.
- ii. It is recommended that there should also be gender-based parenting programs such as the 'Malachi Dads' mainstreamed in both prison divisions for male and female inmates alike. This would reduce stress and facilitate an acquisition of parenting skills among prisoners. Such programs would facilitate self-transformation. Inmates would leave prison not only as punished but corrected and reformed citizens.
- iii. It is recommended that the Remote Parenting Program should be given much attention and be implemented totally. This will in turn positively impact on the reformation of the imprisoned parents.

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