

Biblical Basis for Chaplaincy Involvement in Rehabilitating Prisoners in Kenya

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the biblical teachings regarding rehabilitating prisoners in Kenya. The Kenya Prisons Service (KPS) has invested resources into prisoners' rehabilitation programs. However, despite the government institutionalising prison chaplaincy since 1957 as valuable in the rehabilitation process, prisoners and recidivism rates have continued to escalate unabatedly, weakening the socio-economic and socio-political fabric of the nation's development. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The study was informed by Mugambi's Reconstruction Theology and Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory. Proportionate, stratified simple random and snowball samplings selected a sample size of 290 respondents from a target population of 4178. Quantitative data were analysed utilising the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Data was analysed thematically, coded and processed. The study findings show that Biblical teachings on rehabilitating prisoners are limited due to hermeneutical problems. The study concludes that Biblical teachings propagated by chaplaincy in rehabilitating prisoners demonstrate God's justice, mercy, unconditional love and salvation. The study recommends recognising multi-religious agencies and integrated Biblical reconstructions as effective in prisoners' rehabilitation. The role of chaplaincy in nurturing prisoners to hear, study, memorise, meditate, put into practice, reap success and begin teaching biblical truth to others remains imperative.

Key terms: Biblical foundations, chaplaincy, prisoners, rehabilitation, reintegration.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nations invest significant resources into the development and delivery of prisoners' rehabilitation programs (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2020). Despite this, there has been a persistent challenge in the rehabilitation process of prisoners (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Recidivism has continued to escalate unabatedly, especially in the context of prisoners in Kenya (Oteyo & Kariuki, 2025). There still exists an escalating prisoner population coupled with moral depravity. As a result, prisoners' families, dependents and victims grossly suffer due to the incarceration of their loved ones. Time that prisoners could have spent constructively developing themselves, their families, societies and the nation is frivolously spent in prison. Such a trend portends adverse political, moral, cultural, environmental, religious and socio-economic impacts.

The reality of crime in all human scenes has been a challenging global phenomenon. Prisons were established as part of the criminal justice system, with no country in the world remaining scourge-free. Once order is broken down in a society, the biblical basis for government is destroyed. The chronicle of prisons has been marked by ever-growing budgets, infrastructure expansions and rehabilitation processes impervious to interventions. Mushanga (1974) and Muturi (2001) intimate that the world is gripped in an unprecedented crime crisis; the poor, wealthy, illiterate, educated, male, female, young and old are hardly spared. The predicament of criminality culminates in arrest and incarceration of prisoners, perceived as dangerous criminals, sinful and liable to be dealt with and ought to suffer, die and rot in prison. Prison has been perceived as a receptacle of society's wayward indicator of a weakening moral, economic and socio-political development, as incarceration denies prisoners participation in the life stream of a nation.

The early societies were characterised by reliance on religious authorities or family leadership to maintain law and order. The growth of the family unit weakened the community stream and religious role. According to the Institute for Education in Democracy (2003), the earliest written code was Hammurabi's in 1750 BC. The Ancient Greeks pursued reform and deterrence, not just to avenge. Beginning in the days of Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century, the early Christian church offered refuge to offenders who would have otherwise faced mutilation or death. Christianity became a state religion during the reign of Constantine. The Roman Empire placed more emphasis on mercy, with confinement in monasteries replacing execution. In the early Middle Ages (500-1500AD), the church developed its ecclesiastical system that recognised prisoners as human beings made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27).

Maruna (2002) asserts that prisoners need a rehabilitative model that takes into consideration their positive contribution, usefulness and purposefulness. Although this custom was restricted in most countries by the 15th century, releasing prisoners during the Easter season, and requests by the church authorities to pardon or reduce sentences for offenders, remained for centuries, with the latter still in existence in a modified way. Atherton (1987) traces the genesis of chaplaincy work in prisons as far back as the 14th Century during the Religious Order of Misericordia, founded to provide consolation to condemned prisoners. The Biblical penitentiary was used on the basis that incarceration was to transform prisoners' spirits and habits of living, penance for crimes, amend, repent, convert and be set free.

Globally, imprisonment as a penal system associated with punishment evolved from the 17th century as a place of behaviour modification (Mushanga, 1985). Before the 1700s, world governments seldom imprisoned criminals for punishment. Prison reforms in England and Britain go back to 1733, when the

British Parliament formalised prison chaplaincy. In 1777, a British reformer wrote about the terrible conditions of the prisons in Europe. In 1790, Philadelphia's Walnut Street jail became the first prison in the United States of America (USA). In 1821, the Auburn system was adopted in New York, which ensured a balance between confinement and work. In 1876, the Elmira system was developed and advocated for early release to reduce cell congestion. In terms of chaplaincy work, the Act of 1887 enshrined chaplaincy legislatively. Carter (1977) notes that John Howard and Elizabeth Fry decried the deplorability of prison conditions and recommended a chapel, chaplains, liturgies and Bibles in every prison. KNCHR (2020) shows the USA with the worst crime in the world, with a recidivism rate of 90 per cent, followed by Germany and Asia at 74 per cent. On the contrary, the Netherlands tops the world with the lowest crime rate and prisons being closed.

In the context of Africa, before the colonisation, different African communities punished wrongdoing by banishing the offender from the community, imposing compensation and execution. With the colonialists' arrival, imprisonment found its way into Africa as a tool for easy governance and exploitation. However, African countries dealt with prisoners punitively or with compensation (Maloba, 2017). South Africa has a 74 per cent recidivism rate. Rwanda and Tanzania, 36 per cent, and Zambia, 33 per cent. Uganda stands out among African countries, ranking fourth lowest globally for recidivism at 32 per cent, while Kenya's recidivism rate at 47 per cent is appalling (Atieno, 2017). The Prisons Statistics (2014) shows that the apparent escalating prisoner population is an indication of a concrete challenge in the penal system, with the chaplaincy falling short in providing a constructive biblical rehabilitative model across the decade: 2015 (49,979), 2018 (52,105), 2021 (56,200), 2024 (62,400) and 2024 (62,400). The present prison system is inadequate in providing a biblically redemptive reform for those caught in the grip of crime. This is despite chaplaincy and the biblical model being a rehabilitation model across African countries.

In Kenya, the prison system was introduced by British East Africa with the enactment of the East Africa Prisons Regulations in 1902 by Charles Elliot. According to Kioko (2022), the KPS was established in 1911. White Gaolers were appointed to administer prisons of the first class, while Provincial Commissioners and District Commissioners administered the rest. The first Gaoler, the Inspector of Prisons, Mr. Gray, was appointed Secretary to the Prison Board in 1914. The administrative and management of penal institutions was created in 1917, and the sole responsibility of prisons became vested in the Commissioner of Prisons by then Donald (Mcharo, 2016). The first modern prison by the colonial administration was Fort Jesus in Mombasa, established in 1895. The progress was altered after World War 11; imprisonment became extensive during the 1952 state of emergency and the uprising of Mau Mau. The Kenya Prisons facilities could not cope with the high population, hence detention centres were established to hold liable arrests. Repressive roles, torture, squalor, immortality and congestion characterised the culprits. During this period, Prisons were used by the colonialists to repress, silence and subdue patriots clamouring for the country's independence.

Progressively, upon independence in 1963, Kenya adopted forms of punishment by enacting the penal code and other laws. The growing prison thinking after post-independence led to the belief that incarceration should be designed to assist in the reformation and eventual rehabilitation of the offender. In 1964, Andrew Saikwa was appointed the first African Commissioner of Kenya Prisons. The provisions of the Prison Act, enacted in 1962, operationalised in 1963 and revised in 1967, occasioned changes in the philosophy and practice of penology in line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules instruments

that have put into practice the humanistic treatment of offenders. Various policies and interventional implications have been provided to support the latest thinking in correctional trends. This is because, despite all humanitarian provisions and reform efforts made at the prisons, the unnatural prison degrading conditions affect even the strongest character.

Chaplaincy involvement in rehabilitating prisoners in Kenya has been identified as a potential strategy for addressing the predicament of prisoners. However, many chaplaincy programs in Kenya lack a structured biblical and contemporary theologies of rehabilitation, thus often operating on general Christian compassion without a coherent biblical mandate or model tailored to the prison context (KNCHR, 2020). And, while the Bible contains numerous principles supporting care for prisoners (Matthew 25:36; Hebrews 13:3), the traditional or societal views on justice and punishment seem to conflict with theological ideals of restoration and forgiveness (Guyo, 2025). A study by Oteyo and Kariuki (2025) adds that chaplains lack institutional authority to implement biblically grounded programs effectively. The routine and punitive nature of the Kenyan prison system hinders chaplaincy efforts to rehabilitate through spiritual transformation (Technical Committee on Correctional Services Reform, 2025).

The negative labelling of prisoners necessitated an institution of chaplaincy with a capacity to effectively reconstruct their lives beneficially. The KPS Manual (2006) reports that chaplaincy in Kenya was established in 1957. Prisons Act Chapter 90 (Section 70 and 71) and KPSOs Chapter 73 recognise Muslim, Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths with a mandate to formulate and coordinate socio-spiritual welfare programs within correctional institutions. The official deployment of chaplains to the civil service began in 1963 after Kenya's independence. Prisons Chaplaincy Establishment (2025) shows that 120 out of 135 prison stations have at least a chaplain deployed, but this is far from adequate. The chaplaincy functions provided by Kenya Prisons Standing Orders (1976) include religious hymns, prayers, instructions and counselling, bible study, debates, concerts, drama, provision of spiritual books, literature and magazines. Chaplaincy operates within a religious framework that recognises the Bible and theological impetuses as imperative in rehabilitating prisoners and behaviour adjustment for improvement of security situations for political and socio-economic developments. The chaplaincy's overall goal is to enhance the quality of life of prison officers and their families, Youth Correctional Training Centre, Borstal Institutions and children 0-4 years accompanying their incarcerated mothers (parents) in prison, as well as the surrounding community.

From the above inferences, despite notable efforts by chaplaincy in rehabilitating prisoners, an escalating prisoner population and recidivism, coupled with realities of moral decadence, are worrying. After release, ex-convicts engage in a never-ending criminality. As a result, prisoners' families, dependents and victims grossly suffer. Subsequently, the time prisoners could have spent developing themselves, their families, society and the nation is wasted in prison. This indicates that the chaplaincy system is impervious to rehabilitating prisoners, portending adverse political, religious and socio-economic impacts. The prison justice system, KPS and government agencies ought to reverse the trend of crime and make Kenya and the world a safer place to live in. The study findings on Biblical teachings regarding rehabilitating prisoners in Kenya, in light of the chaplaincy, contribute a corpus of knowledge to the existing and upcoming literature, a case study of Embu Women Prison (EWP) and Kamiti Maximum Prison (KMP) empirically expedited.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Biblical scripture contains commandments about prison life. However, delineations of prisoners hardly make the Biblical worldview an instrument of justice, care and hope. In Kenya, criminality, imprisonment and recidivism are a worrying reality that chaplaincy has to respond to. Muturi (2001) argues that criminals are made, not born, and are hence subject to rehabilitation. The study form bases for chaplaincy in promoting justice and rehabilitating prisoners. The Bible consists of accounts of prisoners which could form strategies employable by chaplaincy to rehabilitate prisoners to their active participation in the national development.

The Old Testament (OT) has the account of male prisoners like Joseph, who spent years in prison for a false sexual abuse charge (Genesis 39:20). Samson was imprisoned by the Philistines in Gaza for vengeance (Judges 15,16). Jeremiah was put into King Zedekiah's dungeon for unpopular preaching and treason accusations (Jeremiah 32:37). Manasseh of Judah was imprisoned by the Assyrians (2Chronicles 33). David was definite that the Lord hears the needy and does not despise His captive people (Psalm 69:33) and that He leads prisoners with singing (Psalm 68:5-6). Further, Ezekiel's mission and visit to the Babylonian prisoners at Tel-abib and sat among them is an intervention in rehabilitation. The latter concludes the attribute of God for not taking pleasure in the death of sinners but a turn away from sins for pardon (Ezekiel 18:23). However, from within and out of humans' hearts beget evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. Women prisoners in the OT include Esther incarcerated within the castle walls (Esther 3-5) and women of war (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19). The above suppositions of evils amongst men and women call for reformation.

The New Testament (NT) confirms that Jesus was innocently crucified as a criminal (Luke 23:32-43). Barabbas, referred to as a criminal (Matthew 27:26), and Andronicus. Paul and Silas had lengthy prison records (recidivists) in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 23), Philippi (Acts 16:16-40) and Rome (Acts 28:16). Philemon records Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke and himself as prisoners (Philemon 1:23). Jesus disciples including James, John the Baptist and Peter were imprisoned (Matthew 11:2-6, Mark 1:14, Acts 5:17-32; Acts 12:1-18). Women prisoners mentioned in the NT include Athalia (2Chronicles 23:16-17), Junia (Romans 16:7) and Priscilla (Acts 18). The prisoners range from potential, planned or wrongly judged. Astoundingly, Jesus associated faithful Christians with persecution, imprisonment and death (Matthew 10:19). Conversely, a prisoner's life could be an opportunity for battle, victory, faith development and victories. The robber on the death row on Calvary alongside Jesus acknowledged Jesus was falsely accused, unlike them who deserved sentence and punishment (Luke 23:40-42). The confessing robber's contrite and remorseful heart earned fellowship with Jesus on the same day in paradise, where morally decent hearts rest. The latter implies that God ultimately is on the side of the criminalised for reform purposes.

Rehabilitation of prisoners calls for Biblical impetus. Galtung (2001) and Gerhard (2004) share similar views that Biblical principles such as confession, penitence and absolution are imperative in aiding prisoners in fathoming God's gracious salvation and redemptive power over criminal behaviour. For example, David believed the Lord hears the needy and hardly despises imprisoned people (Psalm 69:33), while Isaiah's concern for prisoners was reinforced by Jesus' remarks that:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners... (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18).

Informed by the above suppositions, the researcher explored an in-depth study on the Biblical teachings and principles regarding prisoners' behaviour due to the uniqueness in approach. For instance, framed prisoners may ask what I am to reform from? While some scholars associate the benefits of the Bible as an intervening agent in rehabilitating prisoners, not all agree. Atherton (1987) observes that the experience of prisoners reading the Bible as a cure for idleness became an indoctrination that left the majority as lunatics. Religious liberty, the right to observe the requirements of one's religion and beliefs, is imperative, but depravity leads to dysfunctionality. The researcher concurs with Coyle (2002) that prisoners who do not adhere to any religious group or do not practice faith should not be obliged to do so. Cautiously, Inmates should not be granted extra privileges or better living conditions based on their religion or religious practices. Against this, the need for a balanced and inclusive theological viewpoint on the psychosomatic nature of humanity is imperative.

Colson (2001) contends that the behaviours of prisoners are established within a Biblical framework in their widespread despair, bitterness and stigmatisation. However, prisoners' behaviour is influenced by myriad challenging factors that necessitate interdisciplinary and multi-agency interventions. Further, Colson believes that the Biblical model is effective in transforming and reconciling prisoners and providing motivation for restoring broken lives, communities and relationships emaciated by crime. Gluckman (2001) asserts that to rehabilitate prisoners is to treat them humanely as people identified with Jesus. Bonhoeffer (1937) believes that God became human to be with and for sinful people. A chaplain's role is to show love, solidarity and acts of kindness to enhance prisoners' rehabilitation. This has reference to Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector in his home (Luke 19:1-9) and his obliging half his possession to the poor and four-fold fraud repay (Luke 19:8). This was the case with the OT laws, a man caught stealing was ordered to pay back twice the stolen amount (Exodus 22:4-9) Jesus intermingling with Matthew the tax collector (Matthew 9:9) and Mary an alleged prostitute (Luke 7:38) is an intervention of compassion, listening ear and reconciliation instigates prisoners' productivity and good citizenry.

The Handbook on Human Rights in Kenyan Prisons (2006) reiterates that prisoners do not cease to be human beings, no matter their fault. This has a Biblical Basis in that God's love to errands is explicit despite their sinful nature (Romans 3:23). According to Colson (2001), the Christian approach to human responsibility precludes excuses based on heredity, upbringing or economics, but moral ethos informed by biblical truth. This implies the power of religion has an influence on criminal behaviour, raising the critical question about inculcating virtue in individuals' moral choice. Haselbarth (1976) has it that the reality of the gospel is its transforming power not just to crime but to life's greatest dilemma. When human beings order their lives according to God's created physical and moral order, society lives peacefully and rationally. The biblical worldview provides a basis for true justice, restoration against the disorder that crime and social pathologies cause. For example, Exodus 21 and 22 and the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19) confirm restitution as informed by biblical impetus to crime that calls the offender to make direct amends with the wronged victims. Such religious interventions are necessary in reducing the high cost of imprisonment and fine alternatives tailored to the offence. The need to modernise prison institutions in terms of knowledge, skills development, contemporary infrastructure, and human rights instruments to address the current rehabilitation trends is critical.

The praxis of the Bible is a tool in rehabilitating prisoners, without a Bible to read, hear God's message, study and meditate may lack critical faith-based sustainability, a role incumbent to chaplains (Romans 10:14-15). However, whether or not the Bible is applied, God, in correcting His people, speaks through general and special revelations. Furthermore, ascertaining homiletics as the only mode to bring prisoners to Christ is insufficient. Zedner (2025) associates church wide -preaching and less teaching as inauthentic Christian faith. Similarly, Nkonge (2019) describes the church as expanding at the circumference while disintegrating at the centre. A spiritual in-depth ministration could address cultism, heresies, radicalisation, extremism and fallacies which affect the effectiveness of chaplaincy in rehabilitating prisoners. Authors, preachers and chaplains' expository constructs gaps purporting evangelism as key in contributing a corpus of knowledge on prisoners' rehabilitative models. Berger (2019) acknowledges that Jesus' words gave followers a strategy and building blocks to go forth and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18 -20).

The need for modern chaplaincy biblical interventions that could effectively rehabilitate prisoners to beneficial lives guided by grace, renewal of mind, justice and restitution are prerequisites (Romans 12:1 -2). The NT reform is constructive than imprisonment in the OT laws instigated by instruments of oppression, punishment, retribution for wrongs and penalties for offences and this rendered rehabilitation anaemic (Exodus 21, 22:1 -15). Chaplaincy mandate promotes the Biblical model underlining rehabilitation to punishment and revenge. Guzie (1981) asserts that Biblical teachings on forgiveness provide means through which criminals' inward conviction affects profound change, while an unrepentant heart amounts to crises, conflict and guilt. However, the delinquent with this view is that most prisoners cannot afford to forgive themselves or others, but see incarceration as instigated, thus projecting blame on others.

The hermeneutical Biblical intuitions on forgiveness and restoration are of diverse exegetical forms. Jesus' remark "I was in prison and came to visit me" (Matthew 25:36) is subject to enquiry, whether it refers to visiting Jesus in prison or anyone incarcerated therein. Is the admonition to remember prisoners in Hebrews 13:3 pragmatic or literal? The man thrown into prison until payment of incurred debts in Matthew 18:21-35 is doubting how debtors earn and pay debts in prison? Is such a context relevant to a KPS system that hardly implements the prisoners' earning scheme? Critical impact on prisoners with biblical knowledge is a confronting attempt by chaplaincy in enhancing rehabilitation. The researcher concurs with Singer (1993) that the Bible and its exegesis are an intensifying tool in heightening prisoners' ability to distinguish right and wrong and faith and praxis, which are key in the reform process. Similarly, David (2002) asserts that effective Biblical hermeneutics is an important tool of communicating God's message and standardising measures that establish a transcendental and immanent authority necessary for prisoners' change mechanism. Paul was optimistic that human beings, though short of recognising the common law, have no excuse for behaving as it commands (Romans 2:4). This is largely because human instinct nature is law-abiding, conscience trainable, and the belief that without God there can be no morality and Christian faith (Hebrews 12:2) is therefore misleading.

Singer (1993) sees the Bible and its focus on morality as an intensifying tool that enhances prisoners' comprehension of God and ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Koenig (2002) and Kimani (2018) believe that Biblical faith provides a moral compass for change within prisoners' lives. Wambugu's (2014) findings show that prisoners in Bible-based programs become responsible within and out of prison. The account of Joseph's imprisonment is an icon manifestation of active participation and productivity to society and nation (Genesis 50:20). The Bible records in part:

While Joseph was in prison, the Lord showed kindness and granted favour in the eyes of the prison wardens, making him responsible for all the prisoners and whatever he did in prison succeeded (Genesis 39:20b).

The Bible is apparent that God graciously recognise prisoners as people created in the image and likeness of God. Prisoners deserve utmost respect and dignity (Genesis 1:27). Mugambi's (1995) RCT appropriating prisoners' context delinks biased judgment and suspicion from past failures to fresh living in line with Paul's remarks to Corinthians.

"If anyone is in Christ, a new creature; old things have passed away; behold new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In rehabilitating prisoners, the Biblical view gives the rational explanation of sin, alienation and restoration of God's ordained order. Freud (Colson, 2001) contends that good is found within oneself, if one throws guilt, neurosis and cultural repression to embrace a virtuous attitude, conduct, will, good behaviour and character of integrity through practised faith. The Bible presents the gospel in such a way that prisoners embrace the life-changing power of God. Similar to Freudian theory, prisoners are freed from guilt, shame, negative emotions and addictions that adversely affect their strength and maturity. This is consistent with Ngare (*East Africa Standard* 20, 2000), who states that harsh conditions harden prisoners to feel distanced and despised by God. Dekhakhena (2023) asserts that in level seven man, the Bible is memorised, meditated, put into practice, reaped success, and one begins teaching Biblical truth to others.

Throughout the Biblical literature, a cordial relationship between God, cosmos and human beings exists (Romans 8:18-25). Human beings are empowered with the ability to choose right and wrong. However, free will without responsibility and transparency leads to the separation of humanity and God, which, according to Stinton (2010), is restorable by amending broken relationships. The Biblical teachings provide that God reprove sin and prospers repentant people. Adam and Eve despite sinning, God clothed them (Genesis 3:21), when Cain killed his brother Abel, God still offered him a protection mark (Genesis 4:16) and Samson's sexual promiscuity with Delilah resulted in a dreadful imprisonment and hard labor, yet God granted pardon (Judges 16:28). The seventy years in captivity unveiled God's intent of judgment and salvation (Isaiah 41:14-16), alternative approaches reflecting prisoners' environment, family background, spiritual and economic growth and life-giving component is critical in rehabilitation.

Freedom of worship is enshrined in law. Smarto (1987) believes that prisoners who undertake spiritual programs in prison easily deal with criminality by reconciling with God. However, religious ideologies that are far from ecumenism and interfaith relations among prisoners amount to ethical irresponsibility. Coyle (2005) contradicts Smarto as some confessing prisoners gain privileges associated with their affiliation, beliefs and practices. Relatedly, prisoners do not adhere to common religious orientations, a gap enlarged by laws prohibiting forms of indoctrination. Regrettably, prisons have become an avenue for some prisoners not to practice religion (Atheistic), and false inquiry in rehabilitation strategies.

The Biblical chaplaincy interventions as provided for in the *Kenya Prisons Standing Orders* (1976), religious hymns, prayers, instructions and counselling, bible study, debates, concerts, drama, provision of spiritual books, literature, and magazines are necessary but not sufficient. The KPSO interventions hardly address

factors causing criminality or prisoners' moral, ethics, spirituality or love for God. Gluckman (2001) notes that prisoners tend to live an ethical life to conceal what transpires internally, while others take advantage of chaplaincy Bible-based correctional benefits such as acceptance, leniency, identity, protection, quest for meaning, respect and position. This study sought to contribute knowledge on socio-religious parameters to effectively rehabilitate prisoners' development and growth.

The concept of rehabilitation and punishment hardly leads to individual and societal transformation. The NT discards punishment with no direct provision for a solution. Solomon, reflecting his parenting beliefs, argued against sparing the rod to disciplining a son" (Proverbs 13:24). Proper rehabilitation is not free life but takes shape within the bounds of correcting in love (James 5:19-20). Hardening the hearts and consciences of prisoners against embracing positivity inhibits prison ministry; thus, efforts to rehabilitate prisoners should be interdisciplinary. Hoyles (1972), Hadly (1987) and Gaines (2004) contend that Biblical teachings provide means through which humanity could be led into repentance and reconciliation with God. However, the message of liberating prisoners cannot subsist on mere assumption of justice; criminals ought to retribute as repentance to God without involving the victims offended, which is less constructive.

From the above sentiments, the Biblical teachings provide restructuring prisoners' relationship with God and the community ravaged by crime. Factors leading to recidivism are attributed to failure to take into account Biblical foundations and the eternal consequences of evil choices. Moral verities could be controlled by convincing prisoners that criminal behaviour is a poor choice that brings pain, hardship and separation from the divine authority. The findings are vital as past studies on prisons are general and hardly reflect moral formulations, spiritual guidance and ethical prerequisites for behavioural change. The rehabilitation programs are vital for the purpose of gaining knowledge, skills and attitude appropriate for efficient and effective rehabilitation of prisoners.

The literature justifies the place of chaplaincy and its interventions in rehabilitating prisoners. In contrast, the contributions of chaplains in rehabilitating prisoners remain an issue for further development in research work to surmount old ideas and discredited ideologies on effective rehabilitation. The modern worldview thinking, professional and theological-trained chaplains and scholars in the discipline of chaplaincy, practical theology and religion are called to urgently develop a system that spearheads criminal behaviour and prisoners' rehabilitation process across the globe.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by a theoretical framework developed from Reconstruction Theology (RCT) of Mugambi (1995) and the Psychoanalytic works of Freud (1935). The scholars' insights are critical in rehabilitating prisoners in the 21st Century. The RCT employs Nehemiah's reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall (Nehemiah 1:1-20) as the essence of transforming the mind, reducing criminality and recidivism. The RCT clarion "*Let us rebuild*" demands rehabilitating prisoners amidst massive socio-economic and religio-political complexities. The model defines the future of prisoners without giving room for stigmatisation, biased judgment, suspicion, anger, fear, unforgiving spirit, psychological disorders and guilt. The Biblical teachings provide societal ethical norms that inform prisoners' remorsefulness, concern, care, love, forgiveness, self-esteem, dignity, integrity, healing, restoration and resultant rehabilitation.

Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory explains that human uncontrolled instinct leads to anti-social behaviour, while persons undergoing moral development stages become law-abiding citizens. In this regard, chaplaincy could employ Psychoanalytic Theories: *id, ego and superego* to address factors affecting prisoners such as shame, rejection, guilt, sin and death. According to Hale (2005), *Id* as an instant gratification leads to individuals' resentments regardless of whether the acts are wrong or right. *Id's* instincts, such as manslaughter, rape, horror, anger, resentment, low self-discipline, hate, lust, and desires, war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). *The Ego* strengthens and balances prisoners' morality relating to self-control, esteem and respect. The *ego* concept confronts beliefs, negative peer pressure, and a lack of parental love that easily lead to crime. Intolerance behaviour occurs due to non-assuming responsibility for criminal behaviour, childhood, family and society blaming for incarceration.

The chaplains' role in prisoners' renewal of mind and non-conformity is crucial (Romans 12:1-3). The *superego* represents the inner true conscience of right or wrong that informs prisoners in dealing with psychological disturbances and immorality. As part of reconstruction, prisoners review their attitudes to sexuality, power, wishes, fears, beliefs, conflicts, and emotive instincts like incest, lust, murder and suicidal spirit. Freud's (1935) psychoanalytic model is a key in the treatment of prisoners for consistent temperament and emotional attributes. The theories are appropriate to dissuade prisoners from committing crimes, but a flourishing life (John 10:10).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design necessary for an in-depth investigation of chaplaincy in gathering narratives and experiences related to the prisoners' rehabilitation process, as recommended by Mutegi et al. (2023). The data collection instruments included questionnaires, interview schedules and Group Discussions (FGDs) to generate data. The target population was EWP and KMP. The Prisons' Statistics (2013) shows that the stations had a large population of recidivists, making them viable for a study. The respondents included prisoners, recidivists, chaplains, directors of religious organisations, priests, ministers and prison officers. In terms of data analysis, primary and secondary data were incorporated, and the resultant data were thematically categorised to reflect study objectives.

Table 1: Summary of the Sample of Informants

Categories	Male	Female	Total Sample
Prisoners	100	20	120
Recidivists	50	20	70
Prison Officers	50	30	80
Chaplains	6	3	9
Catholic Priests and Protestant Ministers	4	2	6
Religious Organisations	4	1	5
Total	214	76	290

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biblical Teachings Regarding Rehabilitating Prisoners

On Biblical teachings regarding rehabilitating prisoners. The respondents responded as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Biblical Teachings Informing Rehabilitating Prisoners

Biblical Foundations	Frequency	Percentage
Paul and Silas' story in <i>Acts 16:23–40</i>	59	30
Remember the prisoners (<i>Hebrews 13:3</i>)	32	16
Visit the prisoners (<i>Matthew 25:36</i>)	20	10
To proclaim the release of prisoners (<i>Luke 4:18–20</i>)	19	10
Emmaus Bible Correspondence	18	9
The love of God (<i>John 3:16</i>)	8	4
Barabbas released from prison (<i>Matthew 27:15–16</i>)	8	4
Do not be troubled (<i>John 14:1–6</i>)	6	3
Feeding the prisoners (<i>Isaiah 61</i>)	5	3
Peter's deliverance by the angel (<i>Acts 12:3–12</i>)	5	3
Cross Road Bible Institute	5	3
Zacchaeus the tax collector (<i>Luke 15</i>)	5	3
Joseph's story (<i>Genesis 39:20–40</i>)	4	2
Mizizi	4	2
Total	198	100

From the study findings, the respondents were versed in the Biblical teachings informing the rehabilitation of prisoners. Paul and Silas night in prison (Acts 16:23-40) by 30 per cent, remembering prisoners (Hebrews 13:3) by 16 per cent, Jesus' remarks, I was in prison and you visited me (Matthew 25:36) by 10 per cent, proclaiming freedom to prisoners (Luke 4:18) by 10 per cent, feeding prisoners (Isaiah 61) by 3 per cent and Joseph's story (Genesis 39:20-40) by 2 per cent. The finding shows that most of the verses were derived from the NT, with only Genesis and Isaiah mentioned from the OT. The selective reading of the Bible could yield heretical interpretations. Mugambi (1995) envisage a one-sided theology as grossly misleading. The canonicity of the Bible is manifested in both testaments in enforcing Biblical precepts with the capacity to shape prisoners' behaviour change through reading, meditating on scripture and relating to prisoners by love, patience, hard work and discipline. The chaplaincy should source complete Bibles for use by prisoners, chaplains, officers and families.

At EWP, respondents were less conversant with Biblical verses regarding rehabilitating prisoners. This could have been attributed to the majority neglecting to attend fellowship or prison chapel, non-reading of the Bible or considering biblical teachings irrelevant. At KMP, a relatively large number of prisoners, 15 per cent, had substantial knowledge of biblical verses. Some respondents erroneously associated biblical teachings regarding rehabilitating prisoners with some theological courses facilitated by various FBOs (such as Emmaus Bible Correspondence, Cross Road Bible Institute and Mizizi). This was misconstrued since when the same question was restructured to oral interviews, the respondents were apparent. The findings indicate that prisoners at EWP and KMP were more compliant with other prison rehabilitation

interventions than spiritual veracities. It can therefore be concluded that the high rate of recidivists and moral decadence is instigated by shallow Biblical teachings and hermeneutics on prisoners' rehabilitation. It is crucial for chaplaincy to develop a theological model that adequately addresses the pastoral care of prisoners and moral behavioural change factors associated with criminality. Besides, the chaplaincy policies that enhance prisoners' rehabilitation through resourceful education and training are more critical than building more prisons or instituting harsher sentences.

Chaplaincy Potential to Harness Prisoners

A question was posed to the respondents on the rate at which the chaplaincy's effort harnesses prisoners' potential. Below is a summary of the responses.

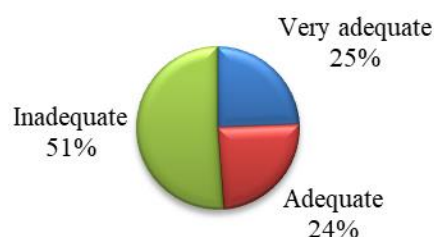


Figure 1. Chaplaincy efforts to harness prisoners' potential.

In rating chaplaincy's efforts in harnessing prisoners' potential, the study findings, as shown above, 51 percent of respondents rated it inadequate, 25 per cent very adequate, while 24 per cent rated it adequate. The 51 per cent inadequacy shows that chaplaincy approaches hardly rehabilitate prisoners. Outdated and punitive, devoid of new trends in rehabilitation. Similarly, Schmalleger (2006) contends that chaplaincy programs are inadequate in providing a constructive impact on prisoners' behaviour change. However, 49 per cent of respondents view chaplaincy as crucial in helping them manage change and enhance moral decency. Need therefore arises for chaplaincy to devise rehabilitation measures such as victim -offender mediation, forgiveness, penitence and restitution to restore broken lives, communities and relationships ravaged by crime.

Prisoners describing their condition in prison

When prisoners were asked to describe their conditions in prison, the following is a summary of their responses.

Table 3: Prisoners Describing their condition in prison

Prisoners' Condition	KMP		EWP	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Opportunity to seek God	46	61	17	41
Punishment	15	20	18	44
Good prospect for behaviour change	9	12	4	10
Hell on Earth	2	3	1	2
Waste of time	2	3	1	2
Total	75	100	41	100

At KMP and EWP, respondents described their condition in prison as follows: 61 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively, cited that it was an opportunity to seek God. A 20 per cent and 44 per cent respectively as punishment, 12 per cent and 10 per cent respectively as a good prospect for behaviour change, while 3 per cent and 2 per cent as hell on earth and a waste of time respectively. It is evident that the majority of prisoners, 48 per cent, associated imprisonment with punishment, hell on earth and a waste of time. Stinton (2005) contends that punishment has no effect on a culture that trains human conscience, as it hardens prisoners to engage in sophisticated crimes and subsequent incarceration. Rehabilitating prisoners in NT is built on Jesus' demonstration of his disappointment with oppressors (Matthew 23:13-29, John 8).

Chaplaincy facilitates prisoners in finding meaning in life. Jesus rejected retaliation and spearheaded prisoners' liberation (Luke 4:18). This is consistent with Mugambi's (1995) RCT that alters the dreadful past and cultivates a hopeful life. Further, the Bible advocates for restorative justice and reconciliation to address crime and harm done to victims, communities and not simply as a violation of law. The OT retribution concept of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:23, 24) plays no part in the modern civilised world. When retribution interferes with rehabilitation, prisoners return to society dispirited to resume criminal behaviour. The chaplaincy has a role to canonise proper application of the Bible with a view to helping prisoners refrain from sin to seek rehabilitation, reform, reconciliation and proper reintegration with humanity and God.

Prisoners' Thoughts of God's Attitude

To determine prisoners' attitude in terms of love, regret or hate, here is the summary of responses.

Table 4: Prisoners' Thoughts of God's Attitude towards them at KMP

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Loving	50	66.7
Regrettable	15	20.0
Hate	10	13.3
Total	75	100.0

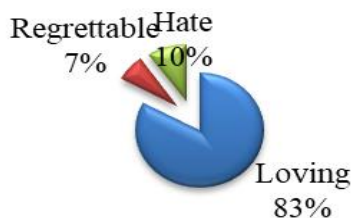


Figure 2. Prisoners' thoughts of God's attitude towards them at EWP.

At KMP, findings as shown in Table 4 reveal that the majority, 67 per cent, cited God's loving attitude to prisoners, 20 per cent viewed God's attitude as regrettable, while 13 per cent thought God hate them. A 33 of those who thought otherwise could be prisoners deprived of God's love, confronted with shame, rejection, and thus easily plan for criminal acts to discharge painful *id* instincts. The chaplains could address destructive motives by regenerating prisoners' conscience for productivity.

Figure 2 at EWP indicates God loving 83 per cent, 10 per cent cited hate, while 7 per cent regrettable. Findings from both prisons, 83 per cent and 67 per cent, were of the view that God's attitude towards prisoners was loving. This means that God's loving attribute provides motivation and a blueprint for rehabilitation. Nevertheless, an average of 13 per cent of respondents associated God with hate and regrettable for guilty and resentful criminal acts. A pastoral counselling to bring prisoners into self-realisation and compellable love of God as manifested in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), God's agape (John 3:16) and the demonic man healing (Mark 5:1-10) manifest loving virtue, caring, welcoming and celebrating rehabilitation. Re-launching chaplaincy and helping prisoners recover from physical and emotional wounds to God's bountiful love marks a successful story narrated by prisoner A.

I was worse, but God changed my life. I know God loves me. I rejoice in God who makes all things a new.

Recidivist B from EWP said that:

I have confidence in the teaching of the Bible as expounded by chaplains and that God loves me.

Another recidivist C, at EWP remarked:

I believe if someone lives by biblical teachings, the love of God abounds unconditionally.

The above viewpoints are biblically attested by the Great Commission-go and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment; love the Lord with your whole heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:36-38). As attested by Freud in (Colson, 2001), good can be found within oneself, subject to dealing with guilt, neurosis and cultural repression. Sadly, prisoners' depraved behaviour and unrepentant hearts amount to conflicts and guilt before God's loving attribute, with the majority hardly affording to forgive themselves or others.

Causal Phenomenon of Criminality and Imprisonment

Prisoners were confronted with the question of who they viewed as responsible for their imprisonment; their responses are as stated in Table 5.

Table 5: Persons Blamed for Imprisonment by Prisoners at KMP

Persons Blamed	Frequency	Percentage
Myself/My sin	35	47
My parents	23	30
My Enemies	13	17
My spouse	4	5
My children	1	1
Total	75	100

At KMP, 47 per cent of the respondents owned up, 30 per cent blamed parents, 17 per cent blamed enemies, 5 per cent blamed spouse, while 1 per cent blamed children.

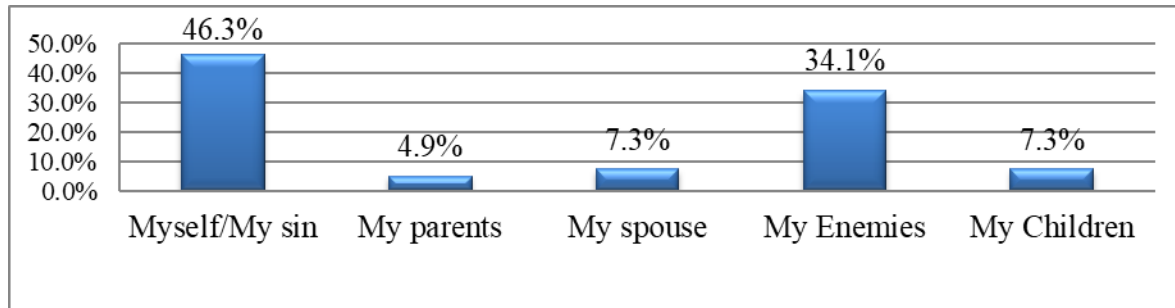


Figure 3. Persons blamed for imprisonment by prisoners at EWP.

At EWP, the study findings, as shown in Figure 3, 46 per cent of the respondents owned up, 34% blamed enemies, an identical 7 per cent blamed children and spouse and 5 per cent parents. In EWP and KMP, the average respondents who owned up represented 47 per cent, while 53 per cent blamed others for their impediment. The findings are in line with the views of Harley (2002) and Gaines (2004) that prisoners do not take responsibility nor assume liability for wrongdoing, since what is everyone's responsibility is no one's business. Relatedly, Muturi (2001) argues that people confronted with criminality create a blame game, the church blames the devil, scientists blame genetics, and the state blames leniency in laws and administration. Biblically, Adam blames Eve for eating the forbidden fruit, the snake accuses God (Genesis 3:12), and Cain offers a defence after killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4:9). A FGD with recidivists at EWP perceived life in prison as profitable to their dependents. The owning up indicates a pleasant venture in prison life. And one wonders whether or not criminality is associated with certain behavioural factors as claimed by Plato (1935). Similarly, Mushanga (1976), Charon (1996) and Fajnzylber (1998) link the root of criminality to traits of sin. Shoemaker (1984) associates criminal behaviour with demonic possession. This could be the case at EWP as prisoners seem unable to seek God's forgiveness, pardon or live guilt-free. The pain experienced by recidivists led them to live in isolation from reality.

From the findings, the essential power in Biblical concepts such as love and forgiveness informs human behaviour. In line with Freud's (1935) *superego* theory that bestows prisoners with true enlightenment of right or wrong, arousing conscience in weighing and correctly judging the consequences of one's actions in the light of Biblical teachings is imperative. The concept envisages that criminality could be reduced by convincing prisoners that it is a poor choice that brings pain and hardship. The study findings show insufficient Biblical Teachings on reform, hence the need for hermeneutical, theological and philosophical approaches to enhancing the prisoners' rehabilitation process.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that biblical teachings from the OT and NT propagated by chaplaincy in rehabilitating prisoners provide a rich tradition that demonstrates God's justice, mercy, unconditional love and salvation. However, biblical principles have hardly been constructive in correction, reparation and restoring relationships. Need therefore arises for chaplaincy to propagate the plight of prisoners by restoring creation order (Genesis 1:27). Biblical teachings are key in changing prisoners' behaviour, and discipline to pray, read scriptures, relating to humanity and God in a world with

emotional, political, moral, cultural, environmental, religious and socio-economic impacts. The limited Biblical teachings on rehabilitating prisoners are due to hermeneutical problems. Proper exposition and pragmatic application of the biblical is important in learning about Christian faith, praxis and truth. For effective rehabilitation, the chaplaincy, in collaboration with multi-agencies, should reflect on rehabilitative goals instead of traditionally questioned interventions. The psychological, spiritual, family therapy, remote parenting, life skill development, social enquiry, case management, restorative justice, behaviour modification principles, mentorship, half-housing and job links are imperative in holistic intervention in rehabilitation and socio-reintegration processes.

Recommendations: The Kenya Prisons Service Chaplaincy's Biblical model reconstructs prisoners' destructive thoughts and reduces crime to an aptness for forgiveness, mediation, restitution, compassionate social responsibility, *agape* love to victims, befriending, transformative space, moral discipline, mentorship, half-way housing and follow-up. Providing adequate opportunities to utilise diverse gifts to nurture skills, talents, aesthetics, music, art, drama, biblical, theological and philosophical disciplines, and personal and family well-being is critical. The Kenya Prisons Service chaplaincy-based training, empowerment, capacity building, legal policy frameworks, motivation, and modern thinking in prisons management in mitigating crime in the 21st Century are imperative. The KPS holistic approach will be ratified in all prisons, comprising multi-agencies including but not limited to voluntary preachers, counsellors, pro-bono services, FBOs and NGOs, recognising diversified contributions to socio-religious and economic development. The Principal Secretary, State Department for Correctional Services, and the Commissioner General of Prisons are to consider a budget for training, empowerment, capacity building, rehabilitation, pre-release, socio-reintegration and job market links. The Government of Kenya is to provide funds for the construction of prison chapels, pastoral and psychological counselling resource centres, a library of literature, baptism pools, the provision of religious elements, and the recruitment of adequate professional chaplains aimed at spearheading the rehabilitation agenda in prisons.

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