

UGANDA PRISONS SERVICE



DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH, POLICY AND PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT

EXPLORING THE DANGERS OF DRUG USE IN PRISONS



Analysis of drug related offences, its effects on Prisons administration and Rehabilitation of Offenders in Uganda Prisons Service.

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Drugs are like knife which kills offenders' life into reoffending, violence, relapsing, health risks and associated costs.



Rehabilitation of offenders can only be successful in a drug free environment.

Abstract

This study analyzed the effects of drug related offences on Prisons administration and Rehabilitation of Offenders in Uganda Prisons Service. Large numbers of prisoners come to prison with established drug abuse habits and others adapt the use of drugs while in prisons as a coping mechanism in overcrowded and violent environment to release tension (PEM consultancy March, 2009). Studies indicate that both prison staff and inmates consider that drugs provide psychological relief and have a positive impact on the social ambiance in a particular setting of Prisons (International journal of Drug Policy, 2013).

Drug misuse is a severe threat to the security of the prison system, the health of prisoners and the safety of prison staff. The effects can extend outwards to prisoners' friends, family and the wider community. The link between violence and drugs in prisons has increased over the years as well as the impact on the health of inmates. Drug use results in assaults, blackmail and violence, not just between prisoners, but also against prison employees. There are also financial costs associated with drug use for instance violence causes the destruction of property and infrastructure. Drug use significantly contributes towards reoffending rates, with two in five prisoners for instance in England reoffending (Light, M. et al, 2013).

Although Uganda Prisons Service has designed rehabilitations programs for the control and rehabilitation of drug related offenders such as group counseling and life skill training, these programs are weak. Drug related offences surveillance systems are also weak or non-existent. UPS neither has segregation facilities, a budget nor treatment programs for drug related offenders and there is scanty information about them, their effects on prison administration and offender rehabilitation and the exclusive measure on how to manage

such effects yet 1.7% of the total inmates in prison are on drug cases (UPS Prisoners Population profile June 2018). This could have contributed to the current recidivism rate which is at 17%; high prisoners' population growth rate of 8.3% per annum and congestion level of 316%. This implies that Uganda Prisons Service is most likely to be faced with a challenge in handling offenders on drug related offences.

Management of drug related offenders calls for affordable access to effective scientific evidence-based prevention, treatment and care. This evokes research study on the analysis of the effects of drug related offences on prisons administration and offender rehabilitation.

The study was guided by four objectives; namely:

- i. To find out drug related offences in UPS.
- ii. To find out how drugs enter prisons.
- iii. To establish the factors that compels the use of drugs.
- iv. To establish the effects of drug related offenders on UPS administration and offender rehabilitation.
- v. To recommend measures to avert drug use in Prisons.

Methodology

A case study research design was employed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study was conducted in 16 regions. Self-administered questionnaires and interview guides were used in collection of data from Officers in Charge, Welfare officers and Medical officers from 146 Prison Units sampled using purposive sampling technique and the response rate was 97.3%. Data collected was prepared for analysis by editing, then categorizing and entering quantitative data into the computer using the statistical

package for Social sciences (SPSS; Version 16). Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to determine the level of association between the variables while qualitative data was manually analyzed.

Key findings

The most commonly committed drug related offences by prisoners in UPS were reported to be unlawful possession of narcotics (36.6%) of the respondents, followed by violence cases (17.3%) of the respondents, sexual cases (16.8%) of the respondents; use of narcotics (13.2%) of the respondents; murder cases (5.1%) of the respondents while the least being reported to be robbery and traffic offences. Drug related offences were found to be higher among youth in the age bracket of 18-35 years. Relatedly East- Central and Southern regions were found to have the highest existence of drug related offenders.

Peer pressure, stress and redundancy were significantly associated factors that compel the use of drugs in prisons. Others factors mentioned though not significant with drug use were the environment, the urge to charge emotions and the type of work prisoners normally engage in.

Major channels through which prisoners access drugs included during outside working parties and sale of drugs from one prisoner to another. Others channels included staff trafficking with prisoners, prisoners' visitors, prisoners buying drugs from staff and staff sharing drugs with prisoners.

The gaps that were found in the administration and rehabilitation of drug related offenders in Stations include inadequate accommodation, lack of segregated facilities, lack of specialized unit for the treatment of drug related offenders, inadequate treatment

programs, inadequate specialized personnel to handle drug related offenders and inadequate drugs.

The effects of drug related offenders on Prison administration and rehabilitation of offenders were significantly associated with violence; inciting violence; re-offending; assault; posing danger to society; making prisons administration and rehabilitation costly; risks of acquiring diseases; teaching others to use drugs. Equally drug relapse affects concentration and completion of rehabilitation programs; puts the life of prisoners and staff at risk and also tarnish the image of the service.

Recommendations

The study recommended that UPS Should;

1. Provide adequate rehabilitation programs in all stations for all inmates to be kept active so that they don't remain redundant to engage in drug abuse.
2. Establish a country wide sensitization programme to increase knowledge about the dangers of drug use for both staff and prisoners and IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials distributed on the dangers of drug abuse.
3. Enhance surveillance and searches on prisoners from outside parties, court, visitors and staff in all prisons by use of detective machines, sniffer dogs, CCTV cameras, and construction of wall fences with razor wires.
4. Collaborate with other stakeholders like police, Court, NGOs, CBOs, Local councils for proper offenders profiling.

5. Complete the development of prisoners' information systems and roll it out to all Prisons to allow for identification of re-offenders, tracking progress and results from rehabilitation programs.
6. Develop a treatment policy for drug related offenders in order to enhance the treatment programs to help tackle withdrawal syndrome, relapse and other associated health risks that hinder rehabilitation and reintegration of drug related offenders.
7. Use the research information obtained to advocate for more resources required to scale up treatment of drug related offenders, construction of specialized wards, care, support and prevention of drug use in Prisons.
8. Established specialized treatment units for managing and treatment of prisoners on drug related offences within regions.
9. Recruit addiction medical specialists and carry out a comprehensive training needs assessment for specific staff with the view of developing the capacity to handle drug related cases.
10. Lobby Ministry of Health to operationalize the arrangement of accessing the Primary Health Care Conditional Grant to address inadequate and stock of out drugs for the treatment of drug related offenders in prison.
11. Enhance after care programs for release drug related offenders to reduce on the rate of re-offending.
12. Create a mechanism for tracking inmates who committed offences due to the influence of drugs like having and checking the copy of the summary sheet of the case, screening and testing prisoners on admission etc.

13. Staff screening on drug use at the entry in the service and continuous screening since they can be agents of drug abuse in Prisons.
14. Conduct an in-depth study on the nature of the cases committed by offenders to establish the statistics of drug related offenders and their re-offending rate.

