

Ugandan Prisons: Issues that Affect Female Prisoners
By Kiconco

**Ugandan Prisons: A Reflection on the Need to Develop an
Understanding of Issues that Affect Female Prisoners**

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Abstract

This paper provides a reflection on the need for the prison system in Uganda to develop an understanding of the specific issues that affect female prisoners as a basis for implementing policies and programs that meet their special and unique needs as women. Drawing from vast international literature and few studies from African countries, this paper shows that the need for an understanding of issues that affect female prisoners is based on the fact that the pathway to crime and to prison between female and male prisoners is in most cases different. The paper's disposition is engendered by two previous studies conducted in female prisons in Uganda. In those papers, a history of multiple victimization among female prisoners, lack of understanding of issues affecting female prisoners together with insufficient programs needed to ease their pains of imprisonment and prepare them for life outside prison was clearly stated. Owing to the pertaining situation inherent with female prisoners in Uganda, this paper recommends that there should be more studies on female prisoners to generate agenda for policy makers and practitioners in the criminal justice system of Uganda. Of specific interest, knowledge on women's multiple forms of marginalization is important for prisons in developing programs that help in reducing not only the various forms of pain associated with imprisonment but also prepare women to re-enter the society that is gendered and patriarchal.

Key words: Women prisoners, Prisons, Gender, Uganda, Feminism, Programs, Policies, Criminal Justice System.

Introduction

The history of criminology and criminal justice system is presented as a history of men. That is, a history of male researchers studying male offenders, victims, prisoners and professionals (Cohen, 2016; Freiburger & Marcum, 2016; Inderbitzin, Bates & Gainey, 2017). Women as offenders, victims and prisoners were lacking in theory, research and in policy until 1970s, yet, women were being arrested, tried and sentenced (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013). Female crime was downplayed and taken to be a minor variation of male crime, and, the first criminological theories linked female offending to sexuality (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013; Welek, 2002). This had an implication to female offenders in that they were labelled and doubly punished for violating both the law and gender norms (Belknap, 2001; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013; Welek, 2002). It is the development of feminist criminology with the women's movement of the 1970s that responded to this androcentric nature of criminology by documenting gender

bias, widespread discrimination against women offenders, victims, prisoners in the criminal justice system and in legal professions as practitioners (Gundy, 2014; Renzetti, 2013).

Literature shows that in contrast to vast and extensive research on men's prisons and prisoners since 1940s, major studies on women prisoners were not conducted until 1960 (Belknap, 2001; Heidensohn, 1985). This is attributed to such factors as; women constituting a small percentage of prison population, they are imprisoned for less dangerous and serious crimes than men and they are less likely to riot and destroy property than men (Belknap, 2001; Gopal, 2015; Heidensohn, 1985). Studies on the history of women prisons show that women prisoners were at first imprisoned with male prisoners, treated differently and suffered sexual and labor exploitation from both male guards and male prisoners (Belknap, 2001; Pollock-Byrne, 1990). Such exploitation and victimization was a result of historical bias that crime is a preserve of men and a good woman is not supposed to offend (Mallicoat, 2015; Welek, 2002). Changes in the female prisons that include having separate prisons guarded by female officers resulted from the efforts of female reformers and feminists in Europe and America (Dobash, Dobash & Gutteridge, 1986; Pollock-Byrne, 1990).

Researchers are, therefore, concerned with whether prisons that were designed with male offenders in mind are sensitive to the specific problems and needs of the minority female prisoners (Barberet, 2014; Pollock-Byrne, 1990; Urbina, 2008). It is argued that women prisoners are a hidden population, and nobody bothers with what happens inside their locked and tightly guarded prisons (Barberet, 2014). A call for more attention to the study of female prisoners is needed with the view that even when the number of female prisoners remains small, the rate of female incarceration has been increasing more than that of males (Freiburger & Marcum, 2016; Welek, 2002). Such an increasing number of female prisoners accommodated in prisons designed for men has attracted attention of researchers that have documented the specific needs of female prisoners, which have been misunderstood and ignored by the prison systems. In the next section, I present a discussion of the literature on female prisoners.

Literature on female prisoners and prison conditions

Literature shows that prison conditions and demographic characteristics both male and female prisoners have got similarities and differences. There is a huge literature on female prisoners, especially, from Europe and America. This section presents a summary of this literature to get an idea of specific issues that affect women inside and outside prisons. In terms of prison conditions, it is argued that women in prisons suffer all the same deprivations, degradations and humiliation as men (Dwyer & Carlen, 1987; Genders & Player, 1987). Additionally, women suffer others that are specific to them as imprisoned women (Barberet, 2014; Genders & Player, 1987). Scholars argue that educational, work and leisure opportunities in the women's prisons are limited and that women prisons tend to

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be more disciplinary and rigid (Dwyer & Carlen, 1987; Gundy, 2016). Women prisons are also shown to be few, small, isolated with high degree of violence and tension some started by women who fail to cope with prison life and others provoked by prison officers (Barberet, 2014; Genders & Player, 1987; Pollock-Byrne, 1990).

The demographic characteristics of male and female prisoners are also shown to have some convergences and divergences. Their profiles are shown to be somehow similar in that they both primarily come from lower socio-economic background, ethnic and racial minority, show a history of drug and alcohol addiction and all have evidence of mental and physical health issues (Dehart, 2008; Urbina, 2008). However, women are biologically, psychologically and socially different from men (Genders & Player, 1987; Gundy, 2016). Literature shows that whereas both male and female prisoners are likely to be from low socio-economic background, majority of female prisoners are more likely than male prisoners to be sole care takers of their minor children and other dependents like parents, are likely to be less educated and employed than male prisoners (Gundy, 2016; Urbina, 2008). Female prisoners are also likely to report multiple mental and physical health problems, previous physical and sexual abuse and childhood experiences that include substance abuse by parents, sexual abuse as children, stress, trauma and fear in many stages of their lives (Barberet, 2014; Radosh, 2017). Moreover, female prisoners are likely to be first-time offenders with fewer previous convictions and when they commit violent crime, it is often against someone they know and as a result of escaping abuse (Barberet, 2014; Dehart, 2008; Gundy, 2016; Marcus-Mendoza, 2016). These specific issues are supported widely in literature all over the world. The experience of female prisoners in Africa is reported not to be different from that of female prisoners in other international countries. In the next section, ideas on female prisoners in Africa are presented.

Female Prisoners in African Context

Africa is one of those continents with an underdeveloped state of criminology and scanty literature on general subject of crime and specific prisons studies on women. It is no wonder that some scholars have since called for decolonization of criminology (Agozino, 2010). However, few prison studies in some African countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Botswana show that issues that affect female prisoners are not different from the ones reported in the vast literature in other parts of the globe. Majority of female prisoners in Africa are presented as first-time offenders with minor children, generally, poor with less formal education, unemployed / underemployed (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Fasanmi, 2015; Modie-Moroka, 2003). A significant number of female prisoners in Africa is also presented as a victim of domestic violence with prior history multiple physical, sexual, emotional, psychological victimization from close family male members and friends (Ackermann, 2015; Africa, 2015; Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2015; Modie-Moroka, 2003; Yenjela, 2015; Young-Jahangeer, 2015;). The female prisoners convicted of murder are shown to have

murdered close friends, partners and doing so as the last resort, in order, to end the violence (Haffejee et al. j2015).

Studies show that prisons in Africa have a poor understanding of gender and health needs of female prisoners evidenced by programs that do not meet the needs of female inmates (Adeoye & Osagbemi, 2013; Dixey, Nyambe, Foster, Woodall & Baybutt, 2015; Olugbenga-Bello; Solomon, Nwankwoala & Ushi, 2014). The widespread discrimination of female prisoners as a result of poverty, culture and gender norms is presented in African literature (Ackermann, 2015; Ebeniro, 2011; Pillay & Ngubane, 2015; Todrys & Amon, 2011). Moreover, women are treated as offenders, yet they are victims (Agozino, 2008; Agozino, 2002). The prison for such women is presented as a secondary source of victimization and the pains of imprisonment in terms of loneliness, separation, anxiety, mental and health issues are beyond imagination (Hiralal, 2015). It because of special problems affecting women presented in both international and African literature that researchers advocate for policies and programs specific to the needs of female prisoners, in order, to help them not only cope with the pains of imprisonment but also to re-enter the society after being released as empowered individuals (Barberet, 2014; Urbina, 2008). Programs according to researchers should be provided by people with strong interpersonal skills in an environment free of punishment and should allow women to freely express themselves and receive support from each other (Barberet, 2014; Pollock-Byrne, 1990; Sharp, Marcus -Mendoza, Cameron & Daniel-Roberson, 2016). Programs that involve effective treatment, rehabilitation and psychological services relevant for women mothers, and those with history of all sorts of abuse are relevant (Covington & Bloom, 2007). These include medical care, counselling services, training for drug independence and coping skills, gynecological and obstetric services and mental health programs among others (Covington, 2008; Pollock-Byrne, 1990). It is argued that after release, women still face responsibilities and issues related to gender and class which they left behind and, therefore, need empowerment programs such as good role models, job training and education both vocational and formal to promote self-sufficiency (Doherty, Forrester, Brazil & Matheson, 2014; Genders & Player, 1987; Radosh, 2017; Sharp, Marcus-Mendoza, Cameron & Daniel-Roberson, 2016; Welek, 2002).

From the above-presented international and African literature, it is clear that a female prisoner requires a different understanding from a male prisoner. More studies are needed to generate knowledge about specific gender needs of female prisoners to implement programs that meet such needs. However, progress has been made to generate such knowledge in other African countries such as South Africa and Nigeria. Literature on female prisoners in Uganda is scanty and the only survey that documented demographic characteristics of female prisoners is by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Such a state is worrying given the unique features of female prisoners that require special attention of policy makers. Moreover, in this survey women in Uganda are shown to be imprisoned for more violent crimes and this contrasts with the literature presented in other African and western countries (Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) and Penal

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Reform International (PRI), 2015). The motivation for this paper is also based on this literature gap. In this paper, I argue that issues of female prisoners in Uganda are yet to attract both the attention of researchers and prison institutions. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to provide a reflection on the need for prisons in Uganda to develop an understanding of women prisoners as a basis for developing programs that are relevant to their needs. In the next section, a picture of prisons in Uganda is presented.

Contextualizing the paper: Prisons in Uganda

The prisons in Uganda are under the directive of Uganda Prison Service and are governed by the legislation of Prisons Act of 2006. The Uganda Prisons Service was established by the 1995 Constitution of Uganda article 215 to serve the purposes that include among others ensuring that all the legally- detained prisoners are kept in safe custody and produced before court when required by law until they are lawfully discharged and ensuring that prisoners are rehabilitated, reformed through training and educational programs and re-integrated into communities (Prisons Act, 2006:5). The rights of prisoners are provided for in the Prisons Act and in the constitution of Uganda. They include and are not limited to the rights for all prisoners to be treated with respect and dignity and no discrimination on the basis of any attribute that include sex, race, religion and social origin among others (Prisons Act, 2006: 28). In terms of management of male and female prisoners it is stated that male and female prisoners should be segregated by being confined in separate prisons or separate parts of the same prison, in order, to prevent contact or communication between sexes except for the purpose of work and under strict supervision (Prisons Act, 2006).

Special needs of pregnant female prisoners and those with infants are also provided for in the Prisons Act and, accordingly, a female prisoner may be admitted with her infant until 18 months when the infant will either be handed over to a friend /relative or to the welfare and probation authority in the event that there is no relative or friend able and willing to take care (Prisons Act, 2006: 28). For the nursing of pregnant mothers, special facilities relevant to their conditions may be provided according to the Act. In summary, Uganda has laws and legislations that take into consideration the rights of all prisoners and the position of women in the society. For example, article 32 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda states that women shall have the right to affirmative action for the purpose of redressing the imbalances created by history, tradition and cultures or traditions, which are against their dignity, welfare, interest or which undermine their status are prohibited by the constitution (p:40).

Uganda so far has got 244 prisons (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2017). Female prisoners are held in over 110 prisons either in a separate wing of men's prisons or in 13 prisons exclusively meant for women (FHRI & PRI, 2015). Data from Uganda Police Annual Crime Reports and UBOS, 2017) show that both the offending and imprisonment rate of women has been increasing. For example, the number of female prisoners increased from 1,477 in 2012 to 2,196 in 2016 (UBOS,

2017). In terms of female prison population, the situation in Uganda is not different from other countries. Female prison population is 2,196 of the total prison population of 51,247 (UBOS, 2017). This represents only 4% of the total prison population.

Basing on the 2006 Prisons Act and the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, one may be tempted to think that the issues of women generally and female prisoners, particularly, are well understood and addressed. However, in this paper, I argue that prison institutions in Uganda are yet to develop an understanding of special issues affecting women and, therefore, develop programs that are relevant to female prisoners. My argument is based on poorly compiled data that does not reflect the demographic characteristics of both male and female offenders, scanty research on female prisoners and information presented in national newspapers on Uganda prisons. All these issues make a female prisoner invisible, an issue that is reflected on in the next section.

The invisibility of female prisoners in Uganda

Female prisoners in Uganda are a 'hidden' population. Their issues are not exposed to the public and to the policy makers. It should be noted that empirical studies on both male and female prisoners are scanty in Uganda. However, in terms of visibility to the public, a female prisoner in Uganda is less visible than a male prisoner. Most of the media reports cover male prisoners and male prisons. Important is that it is only male prisoners who are taken out of the prison for work, especially, when hired by private individuals. It is not uncommon to see many cars on a daily basis carrying male prisoners to different work destinations. Therefore, a male prisoner in Uganda is exposed to the world outside prison while the female prisoner is confined inside the prison. A search of studies on prisons in Uganda shows many national newspaper articles and video documentaries. I observed the newspapers and photography to come up with the conclusion that a female prisoner in Uganda is not at all a priority of both national and international journalists. Moreover, in terms of work, leisure and education programs most of the information reported in national newspapers only concern male prisoners (Bogere & Wanyenze, 2011; Mudoola, 2014; The Journal News, 2016; VICE Sports, 2017). It is only male prisoners shown in papers after having excelled in formal education programs (Bogere & Wanyenze, 2011; Kyazze, 2018; Mudoola, 2014). For example, an international journalist Ben Ferguson documented a comprehensive video of a soccer match inside Luzira male maximum prison, which shows that Uganda is employing an alternative form of incarceration. This includes reform through annual football competition between different prison teams named after European clubs like Liverpool and Arsenal whereby the winner team earns a trophy and other gifts like sugar, soap and goats to slaughter as they all celebrate their victory. In the video, it is portrayed that on such a day, even the prison guards are not watching the prisoners but are watching the football match and every inmate is happily supporting his team (VICE Sports, 2017). However, this

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documentary was in the male prisoner, no one knows whether this arrangement takes place in the nearby Luzira female maximum prison.

Uganda is ranked number one country in Africa with the best rehabilitation plan and number four in the world with the less rate of re-offending (Mudoola, 2014). In the article, it is the picture of men on sewing machines presented. Here one is tempted to argue that such a conclusion is based on the majority prisoners who are men. The only information concerning female prisons shows female prisoners learning salon-related skills, weaving and handcraft (Kyazze, 2018; Mudoola, 2013). This confirms the view that the few programs given to women in prisons are gender-stereotypical and only aim at preparing them to be good women and mothers (Genders & Player, 1987). Conversely, information in national newspapers on formal education within Ugandan prisons only talks about men (Bogere & Wanyenze, 2011; Mudoola, 2014; Mudoola, 2013; Wanyenze, 2017). Accordingly, some male inmates have already graduated with certificates and diplomas in law while many are enrolled for both primary and secondary education (Bogere & Wanyenze, 2011; UBOS, 2017). Information from Uganda Bureau of Statistics shows that out of the number of prisoners that was attending formal education in 2016, none of the female prisoners had graduated with a formal certificate while 147 men graduated with diploma and certificates (UBOS, 2017:58). It is suffice to note that prisons for women lack classrooms and those enrolled so far have to study under trees and depend on the mercy of weather if they are to consistently attend lectures (Nantume, 2016).

From the above presented situation, one would be justified to argue that female prisoners in Uganda are ‘invisible.’ They are, indeed, accommodated in prisons that were, hitherto, built for men. In regard to their plight as a special category of prisoner’s visa Vis the nation’s justice system, women prisoners are yet to attract the attention of researchers, public and policymakers. The call for prisons to develop an understanding of female prisoners is, unfortunately, based on this situation that is compounded by poorly compiled data in the Police Annual Crime Reports. However, more understanding of issues concerning female convicts/offenders is possible with more empirical research that will generate more and realistic data for policy-making agenda and policy implementation function.

Prison research has not captured attention of researchers in Uganda and criminology as a discipline until recently has been taught as merely a course unit, rather than a full course on its own. It is no wonder that the work of researching and advocating for rights of female prisoners has been relegated to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and human rights advocates groups with financial support from international Human Rights bodies. A search on relatively empirical research on female prisoners in Uganda shows a survey report compiled by NGOs; Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) and Penal Reform International (PRI) (2015) and one book chapter by Neudek (2002). It is a widely accepted view that female prisoners have their unique problems beyond their personal limitations. This, ordinarily, would call for attention of the criminal justice system to institute studies that pay attention to female prisoners in Uganda.

However, a reflection on the two studies used in this paper gives us an idea of who female prisoners in Uganda are and a basis for advancing the need for further understanding of the issues that affect women in Uganda. The following section gives a discussion about female prisoners in Uganda basing on the two studies.

Findings of studies on female prisoners in Uganda

The demographic results of the survey that employed 194 female prisoners from 10 different prisons in Uganda show that majority of female prisoners were first offenders with minor children, had less formal education with 97% of them lacking formal certificate (FHRI & PRI, 2015). Majority of them were underemployed and poor. Poverty situation was found at 76% and those categorized as poor at 40% while those rated as very poor represented by 36% (FHRI & PRI, 2015). The study report further indicates that 57% of women were either charged with or convicted of violent crimes such as murder, manslaughter and assault. Others were convicted of acts such as theft, fraud, prostitution and inciting violence. Accordingly, poverty and domestic violence were most important factors responsible for female crime. Women reported that they committed offence for the sake of supporting the family, protecting children and also because of poverty, domestic violence, coercion and self-defense (FHRI & PRI, 2015).

The report also indicates a range of practical and psychological effects of imprisonment that include loss of jobs, loss of homes, family breakdowns, depression, anxiety, insomnia, anger and self-harm among others. For example, 63% reported cases of depression and 49% reported insomnia. However, it is shown that only 8 women were receiving treatment for the health-related issues while others had never received treatment (P:18). Also, according to the report, majority of the female prisoners had served many years in pre-trial detention facilities and those convicted were given harsher and long sentences. Majority of them were to serve a sentence of between 3 to 25 years (P: 15). This implies that most of the 'innocent' women are, often, held in prison. As Agozino (2008) argues, if most of the innocent victims held in prisons are released and others awaiting trial granted bail, the problem of prison overcrowding that affects most of the African countries would be solved (P:256). Considering the fact that women are the primary caregivers of the children, sick and the elderly in society, subjecting them to a longer sentence affects the lives of those who rely on their tender care (Neudek, 2002).

Neudek (2002) on the other hand took a human rights approach to document human rights abuses inside women prisons in Uganda as compared to men's prisons. Neudek notes that prisons in Uganda were meant for men and could not meet the needs of pregnant, breast-feeding, menstruating women and the appalling conditions with inadequate food, health facilities, water, work, education and recreation were clear (p:16). Neudek (2002) also shows that majority of female prisoners in Uganda are victims of domestic violence, disrespect and provocation and are convicted of either murder or manslaughter that in most cases happen

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either in self- defense or accidentally through fights and brutal battering by male friends and husbands. Such a state is compounded by the effects of unemployment and poverty that force women to commit acts such as thefts, infanticide and child-stealing (P: 16).

A reflection on the above two studies shows that Ugandan female prisoners' demographic characteristics and issues that affect them inside prisons are not different from those that affect women elsewhere. The questions raised here are: Is the criminal justice system aware of these issues? How are women arrested by police, judged and sentenced by courts of law? Are prisons aware of the issues that affect female prisoners? Such questions should attract the interest of researchers in country that is still lacks more and important knowledge on female prisoners. Knowledge generated should not only remain in books and journal articles, but the policymakers should access it for implementing gender-specific policies and legislations suited for female offenders and prisoners. It has been recognized by scholars that knowledge of the unfair and discriminatory treatment of women and all issues that affect them may not be in the conscious state of the dominant group of men (Brooks, 2007). Given the fact that men as professionals are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, availing to them such knowledge is important for the system to develop gender-sensitive policies and judgements.

Scholars have argued that equal treatment of men and women does not mean sameness and treating women offenders and prisoners differently from their male counterparts is not unfair or discriminatory (Neudek, 2002). In fact, the reverse is true given the view that women offenders and prisoners have distinctive needs that must be identified and addressed so that they receive equitable treatment (Neudek, 2002). It is worth noting that the prison system in Uganda is part of the wider social structure that is gendered and issues beyond the confines of prisons may overwhelm it. I, therefore, argue that an understanding of issues that affect female prisoners should involve an understanding of issues that affect women in the general population. Programs inside female prisons should not only aim at reducing the pains of imprisonment but also preparing them re-enter the society that forced them to commit crimes, otherwise, the same women will find themselves back to prison. In the next section, a reflection on the issues that affect women in Uganda, which should be the concern of not only the prisons, but, the whole criminal justice system agencies is hereby made.

Issues that affect women in the general population of Uganda

From the two studies on the female prisoners in Uganda, the majority of women prisoners in Uganda are first-time offenders imprisoned for more violent crimes (FHRI & PRI, 2015; Neudek, 2002). As already mentioned, this is contrary to the literature in other African and Western countries that shows that women are imprisoned for less violent crimes. One of the questions that any researcher would ask him/herself is, "how is it possible for a person with no criminal experience to commit a crime like murder?" From the literature all over the world, it is argued that female prisoners who are convicted with acts like murder and manslaughter

share the same experience and they commit murder as the last option to put to an end abusive relationships (DeHart, 2008; Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2012; Slevens, 1999). Studies after studies show that the daily experience and lives of such women would portray abuse and victimization in the hands of partners, parents and other male friends and relatives (DeHart, 2008; MacDonald, 2013; Radosh, 2017). Could this, therefore, confirm the results from the study that shows that 74% women in Uganda convicted of murdering a male family relative reported victimization? (FHRI & PRI, 2015:16). Such a situation raises another question specific to women in Uganda. Does this imply that women in Uganda experience higher levels of victimization than women in other countries? A closer assessment of the general position of women as presented in this section is justified for developing an idea on such questions.

An analysis of some government documents and few researches done in Uganda shows that women in the general population are affected by different socio-cultural practices, economic and political issues. Issues such as violence against women, polygamy, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and bride price, son preference, gender inequalities in employment, education, resource-distribution and civil liberty are presented as some of the factors that undermine the position of women in the broader social structure of Uganda. Such discriminatory practices that have continued to affect and disadvantage women are said to be justifiable in many societies of Uganda (Uganda National Development Plan (UNDP), 2015). According to Uganda Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), (2014) report, one in every two Ugandan women was married before turning 18 years and early marriage is acceptable in that 45% of respondents stated that girls should be married by 18 years of age while 85% stated that men should be married later (p: 6). The same applies to other practices that affect women. Polygamy is valued for many reasons such as clan-expansion, source of labor and respect of men in the society (Amone & Arao, 2014), bride price and early marriage are all valued culturally and supported (Green, Mukuria & Rubin, 2009; Hague & Thiara, 2009).

Persistent high level of sexual and gender-based violence have been widely reported in the literature and in some circumstances, sexual and other forms of violence against women are justified (SIGI, 2014; UNDP, 2015). It is reported that twice as many women as men in Uganda have suffered spousal violence in their lifetime (SIGI, 2014). It is also reported that one in two women has suffered a certain type of violence in her lifetime and two in three people in regions such as West Nile and Mid-Eastern region of Uganda agree that under certain circumstances, spousal violence is justified (SIGI, 2014). UBOS and ICF, 2017 report shows that as compared to 8% of men, 22% of women reported to have experienced sexual violence at some point in time. More so, some societies of Uganda justify wife-beating as a way of correcting women who misbehave and who are lazy (Carlson & Mazurana, 2006).

In the economic sphere, issues to do with unemployment, resource-distribution and division of labor also affect women in Uganda. For example, in terms of

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employment and resource ownership, it is shown that majority of the women do not own land, are engaged in subsistence agricultural work and unpaid household work, childcare and few women are employed in industries that require skills while those in the formal sector, a big number is in less paying jobs as compared to a significant number of men that owns land and is overrepresented in formal and skills-based industries (Daniel, Bowen, Klaus, Deininger & Duponchel, 2015; Deborah & Moussie, 2013; SIGI, 2014; UNDP, 2015). In terms of civil liberty, there are reports that as compared to men, women in Uganda enjoy unequal access to justice. In one study, one-third of the population believed that women in Uganda do not enjoy the same opportunities as men in accessing justice in police, courts of law and local traditional authorities (SIGI, 2014). In some areas such as southwest sub-region, 60% of people agree that the unequal access to justice between men and women is justified (SIGI, 2014)

The above-portrayed situation gives us the idea of a patriarchal society that female prisoners come from in Uganda. A society that subjects women to multiple forms of marginalization in the socio-economic, cultural and political spheres and influence their pathway to crime and prison. It is no wonder that one scholar argued that women in Uganda turn violent as a result of brutal environment (Neudek, 2002). This could probably be the reason why majority of female prisoners in Uganda are imprisoned for violent crimes as compared to women in other countries. This is not to make female prison population a representative of general population of women but a reflection on these issues gives us a picture of the society where female prisoners come from and where they will go back once released from prison. In fact, some scholars argue that women who end up in prison are neither a representative of female offenders nor a representative of women in the general population in that they are likely to be the poorest of the poor and have other unique issues such as multiple forms of former victimization (Pollock-Byrne, 1990). This situation is reflected in the study that found the level of poverty among female prisoners in Uganda to be disproportionate as compared to that of the general population and the level of domestic abuse of women convicted of murder of a male member of the family be to as higher as 74% (FHRI & PRI, 2015: 16). This paper concludes by showing that there is an urgent need for more studies on female prisoners in Uganda to generate knowledge for policy-making that addresses the special needs of female offenders and prisoners in the criminal justice system. Specifically, the prisons that are charged with rehabilitating and reintegrating women back to the community need the understanding of issues concerning pre-prison and prison experience of female prisoners.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to provide a reflection of the need for prisons in Uganda to develop an understanding of special issues that affect female prisoners. From the literature, it is supported that demographic characteristics of female prisoners portray a picture of multiple forms of marginalization and victimization from the society that is male dominated. Women carry with them to a male-designed prison,

a history of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse, less formal education, unemployment and poverty. By not understanding and responding to such a history, prisons become a secondary source of victimization for women who are punished further inside prisons. Fear, anger, depression, anxiety, self-injury, medical neglect, loneliness and isolation, dependency and programs that do not meet specific needs of female prisoners have all been reported in women's prisons (Lawston, 2016). The paper shows that whereas such issues have been widely identified and addressed in research in other countries, they are yet to be identified in female prisons of Uganda. Basing on official government documents of Uganda and a few research papers, this paper has provided a reflection on the socio-cultural, economic and political issues that affect women in Uganda.

Important in this paper is that gender inequalities in aspects such as education, employment, resource-distribution, access to civil liberty and acceptable and justified traditional or cultural norms and practices like violence against women, early marriages, polygamy, bride price and son-preference all work to disadvantage women and, often, determine women pathway to crime and prison. These issues are beyond the control of women and should be a concern of the government but, unfortunately, the government that has failed to protect women against such issues is the same governments that imprisons women who commit crime as a result of multiple forms of marginalization. The criminal justice system from the police to courts of law to prisons compounds the whole issues by wrongful arrests, giving them harsher and longer sentences, setting bail conditions that cannot be met by poor women, subjecting them to inhuman prison conditions and gender stereotypical programs that do not empower them to be self-sufficient. An understanding of prior to prison and prison conditions of female prisoners is, therefore, important in designing programs that are sensitive to the specific needs of women inside prison and empower them to re-enter the society that forced them to commit crime.

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