

# Availability of Prisoners Reformation Programmes and Uptake Determinants at Kitengela Prison in Kenya

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## Abstract

Prisons world over are mandated to reform prisoners and rehabilitate them back into the society as law abiding citizens. This is accomplished through several reformation programmes. A study conducted at Kitengela prison in Kajiado County, Kenya, sought to analyse the available prisoners' reformation programmes employed in rehabilitation at the prison. Specifically, the study analysed the implementation of the programmes, established the challenges faced in implementation, and found out possible control strategies for the challenges. The study was guided by Reformation Theory of punishment and adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of convicts and the prison staff from which a sample size of 113 respondents were selected by simple random sampling method to participate in the study. Data was collected by questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGD) and Key Informants interview. Quantitative data was analysed and presented in percentages, tables, and diagrams while qualitative data was thematically narrated. The study established that for prisoners, carpentry was the most available at 100%, welding 97.5% and training in masonry 95%. While on the programmes that are operational, welding, carpentry, and horticulture had 77.50%, 74.68%, and 58.75% respectively. The most available psychological program was counselling services at 87.50%, while on education, Kenya Certificate of Primary Education and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education levels were the most available, operational and successfully implemented. The determinants of a prisoner's placement on specific programmes are income generation to the government, the need for post-release employment, need to reform, making incarceration bearable, and availability of infrastructures among others. This paper is an in-depth analysis of the available programs, and the factors influencing placement of prisoners in particular reformation programmes.

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## Keywords

Prison-Based Reformation Programmes, Determinants of Prisoners' Placement on Reformation Programmes, Kenya

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### 1. Introduction

Globally, prison programmes are very important tools in reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners as outline by United Nations (UN) Standard Minimum Rules, also known as Mandela Rules. In the USA, the reformation programmes are very instrumental in providing specialised treatment services to prisoners in form of drugs and alcohol counselling, sex offenders counselling, psychiatric treatment, domestic violence counselling, family counselling, vocational and employment training, and life skills education. These programmes are envisioned to improve the character of prisoners in custody, and after discharge so as to reduce crime rates and increase public safety (Jacob, 2004).

One of the prison systems where programmes have succeeded to bring positive change in prisoners mentally, economically, socially, and physically is Norwegian. The net effect is that Norwegian prisons accommodate low numbers of prisoners and have one of the lowest recidivism rates globally. Other world leading prisons systems in the domain of reformation and rehabilitation of convicts include Otago Correctional Facility in New Zealand, the Justice Centre Leo Ben in Austria and the Sup Menlinna Prison in Finland (Gallo-Bayiates, 2023).

In Africa, despite the many challenges which face prison systems such as deplorable living conditions, and sanitations among others there are efforts to ensure that prisoners are rehabilitated through reformation programmes. In South Africa, for example, the correctional services have constitutional mandate to provide reformation and rehabilitation programmes that address prisoners' criminal behaviour premised on a need-based model, the convict's crime, recidivism rate and productivity of the programme. The established programmes have been found to effectively promote not only anger management but also behavioural and attitudinal changes that in the end reforms the convicts. The programmes have a component of psychological and social intervention, and respect and honour of the convict's human rights. It is further noted that rehabilitation mechanisms in South Africa aim at cultivating, in the Criminal Justice System, a culture of accountability, equality, equity, trust, discipline and access to justice (Ahih & Dreyer, 2017).

In Kenya, the history of formal prisons dates back to the reign of colonialists and since then, numerous changes to enhance reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners have been made by post-colonial administrations. Currently, reformation in Kenya prisons is done through psychological programmes such as guidance and counselling, provision of formal education, chaplaincy, training in industrial and vocational skills, farming, and sports and recreation activities. These

programmes are focused on reforming offenders and empowering them with worthwhile skills that they can use for lawful economic gain after discharge from custody. The programmes are conducted by prison officers and trained counselors. The staff involved also supervise the inmates and record their progress irrespective of the crimes for which they were convicted (Omboto, 2023).

Kenya draws its mandate on treatment of offenders from Chapters 90 and 92 of the Laws of Kenya. These laws also provide for the establishment of Borstal institutions and Youth Corrective Training Centre (YCTC) where young and middle-aged offenders between the ages of 15 and 17 years and 17 and 21 years respectively are reformed and rehabilitated. Perception towards the programmes by a majority (72.4%) of the convicts was that they were beneficial to them. Similarly, most (57%) of the prison staff acknowledged the role of reformation programmes in reducing recidivism (Gumi, 2014). The programmes in Kenya are supported by prison open door policy which opens up the prisons for the public and other external stakeholders with the aim of improving infrastructure, housing, clothing and bedding. This kind of partnership provides a friendly environment for reformation and rehabilitation as it leads to positive change in the community's perception of prisoners (KPS, 2017). The study was therefore focused on establishing the specific reformation programmes available at Kitengela prison within the broad aforementioned types.

## 2. Literature Review: Prison-Based Rehabilitation Programmes

Prison programmes aim at reforming inmates from their criminal tendencies through friendly engagements geared towards relieving emotional tension and stimulating inmates' self-respect and ambition. The programmes further aim to lower recidivism rates and enhance self-dependency, among other expected outcomes. Educational, vocational, psychological, religious, and recreational programmes are some of the interventions employed worldwide to rehabilitate prisoners (Mburu & Gathitu, 2022).

Provision of education, as a fundamental prison reformation programme, lays the foundation for all other prison programmes. It provides the prisoners with the necessary competencies, skills and attitudes required for improving their employability after discharge. In United States of America, education programmes have been used as one of the major instruments for crime reduction among ex-prisoners (Bender et al., 2016). According to Mitchell et al. (2020), the US education department analysis indicated that only a few highly educated former prisoners get re-arrested (are recidivists), and the majority of recidivists are lowly educated people. In the UK prisons where, comprehensive educational programmes are fully entrenched, the opportunities are regarded as the gateway to economic and subsequent social upward mobility for prisoners after discharge.

Generally, prison educational programmes are a cost-effective way of reducing recidivism rates globally. In the long run, educating prisoners accrues their personal

income benefit, and catalyses communal and national stability. It also enhances their political participation and volunteerism, improves their personal health and, most importantly, after discharge facilitates their reintegration process (Mitchell et al., 2020). In many Africa countries, Kenya included, prison education programmes have empowered ex-prisoners by giving them a voice, opening doors to a better future, and restoring their social competency and self-esteem, thus reduces chances of recidivism compared to inmates that failed to go through the programme (Abdun, 2017).

Vocational training in prisons equips convicts with skilled crafts or trades to work as an artisan, or technicians. Vocational training programmes offered in prison include trade tests in carpentry, electrical, painting, plumbing, food services, culinary arts, horticulture, upholstery, auto-mechanics, masonry, welding, and leather processing among others. Solomon et al. (2004) postulates that vocational training as a prison reformation programme has positive impact on the life of convicts both in prison and after discharge because it equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge and professionalism in handcrafts that increases their employability and entrepreneurship skills. This helps to change the inmates' attitude from viewing crime as a means of earning a living—thereby amicably addressing the root causes of crime.

Psychology programmes offered in prisons addresses mental health in a correctional setting, and the psychological implications of incarceration as well as related maladaptive behaviour. Prison institutions offer tailor-made modes of counselling depending on the client's needs and choices. The services range from individual to group counselling that targets substance abuse, anger management, anxiety, depression, school difficulty, economic challenges and relationship challenges such as domestic violence, marriage abuse and parenting problems (Henry, 2002). Bieri and Mann (2017) posit that psychological reform programmes are designed to apply professional knowledge and skills in helping distressed prisoners and aid them to overcome mental problems leading to, during and after incarceration. Counselling psychologists and psychotherapists enable prisoners to deal with systemic problems as well as challenges ranging from intra-personal-to-interpersonal problems. The counselling programmes equip prisoners with the necessary traits for co-existence like empathy, patience, compassion, self-awareness, open mindedness, flexibility, good listening, ability to confront problems, and ability to ask the right questions, ability to silence, ability to explore and self-discovery which awakens giant within (Uledi-Moga et al., 2022).

Recreational programmes enable prisoners to bear the stress and strain of incarceration which assist them to concentrate in reformation programmes. Recreation activities refresh the body and mind. In prisons they include in-door and out-door games such as sports. Some are as simple as reading books, listening to radios, and watching television sets (KNCHR, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2010). Religious programmes in prisons inculcates in prisoners the spiritual beliefs on right and wrong, and obedience to the supernatural which guides the felons to be upright

individuals.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: Reformation Theory of Punishment

The study was guided by the Reformation Theory of Punishment. The theory is reflective of the quotation by Mahatma Gandhi's saying that "*An eye for an eye blinds the whole world*". It is also known as or the correctional theory. The theory which originated from the arguments of the positive school of criminology posits that using punishment as an end in itself is wrong (Wright, 2010). Instead, punishment should be used for the transformation of character. The net effect of punishing an offender the theory argues should be to make him or her a better individual. The theory acknowledges that uncontrolled crime causes trouble in the community and interferes with people's daily lives. The theory focuses on the offender instead of the offence. Its goal is to change the offender's mind-set and to rehabilitate him or her to become a law-abiding member of society (Rai, 2010).

Sentences hinged on this theory are consequently tailored towards correcting rather than punishing the offender and typically comprise reformation aspects, achieved through various programmes. The theory rejects all forms of corporal punishment and social exclusion. It instead, champions humanistic approaches to punishment and restorative justice (Wright, 2010). The four aspects of reformative incarceration advanced by the study, namely educational, vocational, psychological and recreational programmes are at the heart of reformation theory of punishment. These interventions are underpinned by the theoretical constructs that advocate for the offender's moral and mental transformation.

Though Reformation Theory of Punishment is perfect in advancing the need for reformation of convicts, its main criticism is that it doesn't appreciate the fact that habitual criminals need not reformative but prohibitive punishment such as the death sentence. Secondly, reformative punishment has been viewed as largely offender-centric at the expense of the victims of crimes. A penal system that seeks to protect the prisoner's rights may, in the process, inadvertently become unfair to the victim. Justice is fair when it is double-edged. Lastly, in nations like Kenya, where poverty is the root cause of many crimes, reformative punishment may end up being a catalyst for engagement in crime rather than a deterrent from criminal activities.

### 4. Study Area and Methodology

The study was conducted at Kitengela prison in Kajiado County-Kenya. It is a medium security prison with a holding capacity of approximately 1000 inmates comprising both convicted and un-convicted prisoners and about 400 uniformed staff. Only convicted prisoners are allowed to attend prison reformation programmes meant to reform them. Kitengela prison is headed by an Assistant Commissioner of Prisons (ACP) who is the officer in charge and deputised by a Senior Superintendent of Prisons (SSP). They are assisted by different section heads who

perform different roles but work towards achieving common institutional goals.

The facility was chosen for this study because it has a number of rehabilitation programmes for convicted prisoners. These programmes include vocational training programs, such as learning skills in electrical installation, leather processing, carpentry, masonry, welding, and panel beating. There is also in place psychological programs in form of guidance and counselling, and mental health plus substance addiction treatment. Kitengela prison also offer formal education and agricultural training to prisoners. Agricultural training takes the form of horticulture, and crop and animal husbandry. For this purpose, the prison has the industrial section which is instrumental in training the prisoners in a range of vocational skills, the school section where educational formal instruction is conducted, the welfare department where counselling and guidance programmes are domiciled, and unlike maximum security prisons, the prison has a farm where training in agriculture takes place.

The study used a descriptive survey design to achieve the study objective of analysing reformation programmes used in rehabilitation of prisoners at the prison. [Kathuri and Pals \(1993\)](#) postulates that descriptive survey design is best for describing phenomena and participants' opinions. The current study adopted this research design because it focused on describing different aspects and outcomes of reformation programmes based on the evidence given by respondents. The target population for this study were 517 convicted prisoners undertaking reformation programmes, and approximately 414 prisons staff taking care of inmates at Kitengela prison.

On sampling techniques, during the time of this study, there were 414 prisons staff taking care of 517 convicted prisoners and about similar number of un-convicted inmates awaiting conclusion of their cases in various courts. The staff members work in 4 shifts, namely; main shift, night shift, late and early shifts. These shifts have approximately equal number of staff. Some of the staff normally guard and supervise prisoners working away from prisons, for instance at the prison farms, and other outside work parties. Also, during every month, some staff members will be on annual leave.

Therefore, staff members who were available at the prison premises on the day and time questionnaires were distributed and were willing to be engaged in the study by way of filling in the questionnaires were 31 officers. Guided by [Krejcie and Morgan \(1970\)](#), the researcher used simple random sampling method to select 27 of the 31 who filled the questionnaires. This number compares favourably with those given out by [Krejcie and Morgan \(1970\)](#). For the convicted prisoners, 110 were willing to participate in the study, but as per [Krejcie and Morgan \(1970\)](#) 86 out of the 110 were selected through simple random sampling, and they participated in the study. Based on the foregoing, the sample size was constituted by 27 prison officers and 86 prisoners totalling to 113 respondents. The respondents were chosen through simple random sampling, and the numbers reached was guided by [Krejcie and Morgan \(1970\)](#).

The instruments used in data collection were questionnaires, key informants interview schedule and focus group discussion (FGD) guides. Qualitative data from interviews and FGD corroborated the quantitative data yielded by the questionnaires. When used together, the three instruments ensure variety and reliability in data collection. The research procedure was as follows. Use of questionnaires was central for data collection in the study. The questionnaires comprised both open-ended and closed-ended items. The researcher and research assistants administered them. While the literate respondents were guided to self-fill the questionnaire, the semi and illiterate were assisted. This ensured accuracy, fairness and inclusivity. Aided by focus group discussion guide, discussions in focus group complemented questionnaires. The FGD comprised of 12 convicted long serving prisoners who had been in prison for more than 5 years and were undertaking prison reformation programmes. The prisoners were selected on the assumption they have an in-depth understanding of reformation programmes. The discussion sessions took place at the prison library. The researcher and his assistant electronically record the sessions and manually took notes. The Key Informant Interview Guide guided the interview conducted by the researcher with the Key informants who were heads of various prison sections. They were the head of the school, head of the prison industry, head of the prisoners' welfare section, and the officer in charge and his deputy. The researchers audio recorded the sessions and manually took notes during the interviews.

The researchers used descriptive statistics such as frequencies to analyse quantitative data and presented them in tables, charts and graphs. Subsequently, the researchers coded and thermalized qualitative data and then presented them in verbatim and narrative discourses. On ethical considerations, the researcher complied with the various ethical standards and guidelines of social research. The privileges and trust given to conduct the study were not abused. Further, the researcher made it clear to the respondents that participating in the study was voluntary and based on informed consent. The respondents were also assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. Written authorisation for the research was sought from Kenyatta University, National Commission for Science Innovation and Technology, and prison departments. Finally, the findings of this research were shared with the concerned stakeholders.

## **5. Discussion of Findings**

The following are the research findings on available reformation programmes, determinants of prisoners' placement on reformation programmes, and challenges facing prison reformation programmes at Kitengela Prison, Kenya. In overall, just like in other countries, the availability of a large number of the trades to ensure reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners underscores the importance the Kenyan government and prison administration attaches to control of recidivism among prisoners by offering them skills on which they can earn honest living after discharge from prison institutions. However, this study findings reveal both alignments

and disparities in the views of those who manage and those who participate in these programs as presented below.

### 5.1. Availability of Vocational Training Programmes

**Table 1** below presents results on vocational training programs available at Kiten-gela Prison, as perceived by both prison officers and prisoners.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics on availability of vocational programs.

Programs	OFFICERS		PRISONERS	
	Available	Not Available	Available	Not Available
Trade test industries	15.0 (75.0%)	5.0 (25.0%)	64.0 (80.0%)	16.0 (20.0%)
Building maintenance	16.0 (80.0%)	4.0 (20.0%)	41.0 (51.25%)	39.0 (48.75%)
carpentry	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	80.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)
Electrical trade	19.0 (95.0%)	1.0 (5.0%)	45.0 (56.97%)	34.0 (43.03%)
Plumbing	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	44.0 (55.01%)	36.0 (45.0%)
Barbering	16 (80%)	4 (20.00%)	62.0 (81.56%)	14.0 (18.42%)
Food services	13.0 (65.0%)	7.0 (35.0%)	44.0 (55.01%)	36.0 (45.0%)
Culinary arts	12.0 (60.0%)	8.0 (40.0%)	42.0 (52.5%)	38.0 (47.5%)
Horticulture	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	52.0 (65.0%)	28.0 (35.0%)
Custodial maintenance	13.0 (65.0%)	7.0 (35.0%)	46.0 (57.49%)	34.0 (42.5%)
Upholstery	19.0 (95.0%)	1.0 (5.0%)	57.0 (72.11%)	22.0 (27.84%)
Masonry	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	76.0 (95.0%)	4.0 (5.0%)
Automotive mechanic	14.0 (70.0%)	6.0 (30.0%)	48.0 (60.0%)	32.0 (40.0%)
Welding	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	78.0 (97.5%)	2.0 (2.5%)
Heating Metal	8.0 (40.0%)	12.0 (60.0%)	9.0 (11.25%)	71.0 (88.75%)
Making Vents	9.0 (45.0%)	11.0 (55.01%)	23.0 (28.75%)	57.0 (71.25%)
Air conditioning	6.0 (30.0%)	14.0 (70.0%)	10.0 (12.66%)	69.0 (87.34%)
Leather processing	20.0 (100.0%)	0.0 (0.0%)	44.0 (55.01%)	36.0 (45.0%)

Source: Researchers, (2024).

From the prison officers' perspective, a significant portion of vocational programs appears to be widely available, with carpentry, plumbing, horticulture, masonry, welding, and leather processing being noted as available by 100% of the prison officers surveyed. These numbers suggest a strong institutional support for vocational training, reflecting a commitment to rehabilitation and skill development. Electrical trade and upholstery also received high marks for availability from Prison officers, with 95% noting their availability. This broad availability, as

reported by prison officers, highlights an institutional intent to offer a diverse range of skill sets for the prison population.

The high availability of programs like carpentry, plumbing, and welding, as reported by prison officers, aligns with the institutional commitment to rehabilitation through skill development. This commitment is mirrored in empirical research, which consistently finds positive correlations between vocational training in prisons and reduced recidivism rates, improved employment prospects, and better post-release outcomes.

Conversely, the prisoners' perspectives on the availability of these programs paint a more varied picture. While carpentry (100%), masonry (95%) and welding programs (97.5%) are perceived as universally available by prisoners, mirroring the prison officers' views, discrepancies arise in other vocational programs. For instance, only 51.25% of prisoners feel that building maintenance programs are available, compared to 80% of prison officers. Similarly, the electrical trade, which the 95% of prison officers reported as available, is seen as available by only 56.97% of prisoners. This suggests possible barriers to participation or awareness among prisoners, or perhaps differences in how availability is perceived between the two groups. The discrepancies between prison officers and prisoners' perceptions, particularly in the availability of electrical trade and building maintenance programs, point to significant issues of communication, accessibility, or perhaps the criteria used to assess availability. Barriers to participation, whether real or perceived, can significantly diminish the potential benefits of these programs.

From the prison officers' viewpoint, the availability of heating metals (40%), making vents (45%) and air conditioning (30%) programs is markedly lower than for other vocational training offered. This is starkly mirrored in the prisoners' perceptions, with only 11.25% for heating metal, 28.75% for making vents, and a mere 12.66% for air conditioning programs. The low availability and perception on training on heating metal, making ventilators and air conditioning programs suggest low prioritization of these vocational programs by prison administration.

One potential explanation for the low prioritization of heating metal trade, making ventilators and air conditioning programs is the resource intensity and high costs associated with establishing and maintaining these vocational training programs. Vocational training programs that require specialized equipment, tools, and instructors may receive less funding and support due to budgetary constraints within the prison system. Heating metal trade, making ventilators and air conditioning training, in particular, requires access to specific machinery, tools, and often more sophisticated facilities to simulate real-world environments, which can be significantly more expensive than less resource-intensive programs.

Another factor could be misalignment between the prison administration's perceptions of labour market demands. In ideal situation correctional education programs should adapt to the labour market needs. While the demand for heating metal, making ventilators and air conditioning professionals has been growing, correctional facilities might not update their vocational training offerings promptly,

due to bureaucratic delays or lack of industry engagement to inform program development. Asked to give his view on divergent opinions between prison officers and prisoners on availability of reformation programmes, a key informant; Number-2 asserted that:

*“You cannot rely on the views of prisoners because they only know about the programmes they are involved in. For instance, those prisoners in carpentry workshop may tell you that masonry or electrical trade doesn't exist which is not true.”*

## 5.2. Availability of Educational Programs at Kitengela Prison

**Table 2** shows results on evaluation of the education programs available at Kitengela prison through the perspectives of both prison officers and prisoners.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics on available education programs.

Educational Programs	Prison Officers Available	Prison Officers Not Available	Prisoners Available	Prisoners Not Available
Primary (KCPE)	20 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	80 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Secondary (KCSE)	16 (80.00%)	4 (20.00%)	80 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Grade 1 - 6 (KPSEA)	8 (40.00%)	12 (60.00%)	42 (52.50%)	38 (47.50%)
Junior School	6 (30.00%)	14 (70.00%)	34 (42.50%)	46 (57.50%)
Academic certificate (non-vocational) courses	18 (90.00%)	2 (10.00%)	45 (56.25%)	35 (43.75%)
Academic (non-vocational) diploma courses	13 (65.00%)	7 (35.00%)	32 (40.00%)	48 (60.00%)
Degree courses	9 (45.00%)	11 (55.00%)	20 (25.00%)	60 (75.00%)

Source: Researchers, (2024).

The analysis of the table focusing on the availability of educational programmes at Kitengela prison reveals availability of various levels of education. Prison officers reported that there is universal participation of prisoners in primary education program, while the prisoners indicated an availability of 80%. This unanimous participation underscores a shared recognition of the importance of basic education as a cornerstone of reformation and rehabilitation.

At the secondary education level Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), approximately 80% of the prison officers indicated that secondary education programs are available, while all the prisoners observed that secondary education program are available. This slight disparity suggests that while the commitment to continuing education remains strong among prisoners, some prison officers may not be aware of the existence of the opportunity for prisoners who are undertaking secondary level education. However, 100% of both the prisoners and the prison staff were in agreement that education opportunity for Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exists for reformation of prisoners.

A more pronounced divergence in participation is evident in competency-based curriculum education programs. For instance, only 40% of prison officers and 52.50% of prisoners reported that grade 1 to 6 levels for Kenya Primary

Schools Education Assessment (KPSEA), and Junior School program are available for reformation of prisoners. Though, only 30% of prison officers and 42.50% of prisoners indicated availability for Grade 1 - 6 (KPSEA) and Junior School programs. This suggests that competency-based curriculum education programs are relatively lacking in correction facilities.

The results revealed that the availability of non-vocational academic certificate courses remains relatively high according to views of prison officers at 90%, though the availability decreases to 56.25% according to prisoners' views. This discrepancy could point to differing perceptions of the value or applicability of these programs to prisoners' reformation and future opportunities. A concerning trend was the significant drop in availability for higher education, with only 45% of prison officers and a mere 25% of prisoners reporting the availability of degree courses. This may reflect perceived barriers to provision of higher education in correctional facilities due to resource limitations and eligibility criteria in Kenya.

### 5.3. Availability of Psychological Programmes at Kitengela Prison

**Table 3** shows results on available of psychological programs at Kitengela prison through the perspectives of both prison officer and prisoners.

**Table 3.** Availability of the psychological programmes.

Psychological Programs	Prison Officers Available	Prison Officers Not Available	Prisoners Available	Prisoners Not Available
Counselling	20 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	70 (87.50%)	10 (12.50%)
Assessment	16 (80.00%)	4 (20.00%)	45 (56.25%)	35 (43.75%)
Mental wellness treatment/therapy	13 (65.00%)	7 (35.00%)	65 (81.25%)	15 (18.75%)
Substance use/addiction rehabilitation	16 (80.00%)	4 (20.00%)	53 (66.25%)	27 (33.75%)

Source: Researchers, (2024).

The results indicated that counselling services stood out as the most accessible and presumably effective psychological support offered to the prisoners, with unanimous availability reported by the prison officers (100%) and a high availability acknowledged by prisoners (87.50%). This suggests a strong institutional support and a potentially positive impact of counselling services on the prison population, indicating their foundational role in the prison's psychological support system.

The results showed a notable discrepancy in availability of assessment services, while 80% of prison officers reported its availability, only 56.25% of prisoners perceived assessment services as available. This gap highlights potential barriers to access or awareness among prisoners regarding the assessment services offered within the facility. Results on mental wellness treatment and therapy demonstrated that these services as relatively accessible, with 65% of prison officers and a significant 81.25% of prisoners acknowledging their availability. This high prisoner acknowledgment could reflect the value placed on mental wellness interventions

and their role in addressing the complex psychological needs of the incarcerated population.

Results on substance use and addiction rehabilitation services also showed that they are recognized for their availability by a substantial portion of both prison officers (80%) and prisoners (66.25%). These findings suggest a generally positive perception of the availability of psychological programs at Kitengela prison, with counselling and mental wellness treatment/therapy being highly regarded by both prisoners and prison officers. However, the findings show variations in perceived availability, especially for assessment services and substance use rehabilitation.

#### 5.4 Availability of Recreational programmes at Kitengela Prison

**Table 4** shows results of the assessment on the availability of recreational programs at Kitengela prison through the perspectives of both prison officers and prisoners.

**Table 4.** Availability of recreational programmes.

Recreational Program	Prison Officers Available	Prison Officers Not Available	Prisoners Available	Prisoners Not Available
Ball games	20 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	78 (98.73%)	1 (1.27%)
Track activities	10 (50.00%)	10 (50.00%)	36 (45.00%)	44 (55.00%)
Indoor games e.g. cards	20 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	59 (73.75%)	21 (26.25%)
Modelling	10 (50.00%)	10 (50.00%)	28 (35.00%)	52 (65.00%)
Music and dance	20 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	47 (59.49%)	32 (40.51%)

Source: Researchers, (2024).

The participants reported that ball games are unanimously available according to prison officers (100%), a view nearly mirrored by the prisoners, with 98.73% acknowledging their availability. This near universal availability underscores ball games as the most accessible recreational activity within the facility. Contrastingly, track activities exhibit a stark division in availability perceptions. Only 50% of prison officers reported track activities as available, a perspective that aligns with the prisoners', among whom only 45% acknowledge their availability. This suggests that prisoners and prison officers consider track activities as moderately available.

Indoor games, such as cards, also enjoyed a high rate of reported availability from prison officers (100%), with also a substantial majority of prisoners (73.75%) affirming the availability of indoor games. Modelling activities, similarly to track activities, were perceived as available by only 50% of prison officers, a view that reflects a more considerable gap in prisoner perceptions, with just 35% reporting availability. This significant disparity suggests that modelling may face the most considerable barriers to access in prison facilities. Music and dance activities were reported as available according to all prison officers surveyed (100%), yet only

59.49% of prisoners acknowledged their availability. This suggests a discrepancy between the provision of such programs and the prisoners' awareness or utilization of them.

The findings highlight a varied landscape of recreational program availability at Kitengela prison, with significant discrepancies noted between prison officers' reports and prisoners' experiences, especially in less universally accessible activities such as track activities and modelling.

## 6. Determinants of Prisoners' Placement on Available Reformation Programmes

The data presented in **Table 5** gives the factors influencing inmates' placement on prison reformation programmes at Kitengela prison, as perceived by both prison officers and prisoners. This analysis adopts a scoring system where 1 signifies a great influence, and 4 indicate no influence on the placement on the programmes. Through this lens, a detailed examination of the factors is provided.

**Table 5.** Factors influencing an inmate to undertake a reformation programme.

Factors	Prison officers Mean	Prison officers Min	Prison officers Max	Prisoners Mean	Prisoners Min	Prisoners Max
Generate income	1.8	1	3	1.8375	1	4
Prevents one not come to prison again	1.6	1	2	2.0625	1	4
Ensures relaxation while in prison	1.95	1	4	2.95	1	4
Helps in promoting Socialisation	1.75	1	4	2.56	1	4
Program of Interest	1.85	1	4	2.1875	1	4
Connects with God	2.6	1	4	2.925	1	4
Opportunities for Employment after release	1.6	1	2	1.5	1	3
Enhances Academic Knowledge	1.9	1	3	1.9125	1	4
Helps in forgetting problems	2.2	1	3	2.84	1	4
Make one better person	1.4	1	2	1.825	1	4
Friendliness of Prison Officers	2.52	1	4	2.4375	1	4
Adequate Program Facilities	1.7	1	3	2.375	1	4

Source: Researchers, (2024).

From the table above, both prison officers and prisoners considered the ability of a reformation programme to generate income (prison officers mean: 1.8; prisoner mean: 1.8375) and provide opportunities for post-release employment (prison officers mean: 1.6; prisoner mean: 1.5) as significant influences of inmates' choice/placement on prison reformation programs. These factors are highly valued, suggesting that money incentives play a key role in influencing participation

in prison programmes.

The factor 'Make one not come to prison again' as behavioural and psychological influencer was rated fairly by prison officers (mean: 1.6) and by prisoners (mean: 2.0625), indicating a strong desire for behaviour change as a motivator for inmates' choice/placement in reformation programmes. Related to it, the importance of programmes in making inmates "better persons" was underscored (prison officers mean: 1.4; prisoner mean: 1.825), pointing to a shared emphasis on the influence of moral and behavioural improvement as a motivator for prisoners' participation in programmes.

On emotional and social well-being, promoting relaxation (prison officers mean: 1.95; prisoner mean: 2.95), socialisation (prison officers mean: 1.75; prisoner mean: 2.56), and help in forgetting problems (prison officers mean: 2.2; prisoner mean: 2.84) are viewed as influential, albeit to varying degrees by prison officers and prisoners. This variation suggests that while prison officers consider emotional and social wellbeing of prisoners as a motivator for their participation in particular reformation programs, prisoners consider emotional and social well-being as being of less influence in the choice of the programme.

As concerns educational and spiritual development, enhancement of academic knowledge (prison officers mean: 1.9; prisoner mean: 1.9125) was reported as a significant factor influencing prisoner participation in programs. However, connection with God (prison officers mean: 2.6; prisoner mean: 2.925) were less recognized as influencing factors.

The factor infrastructure and personnel attitudes, adequate program facilities (warder mean: 1.7; prisoner mean: 2.675) was mentioned as factor influencing program participation fairly, and the friendliness of prison officers was acknowledged as factor less influencing prisoners' choice and participation in reformation programmes, (prison officers mean: 2.52) while the prisoners (mean: 2.4375) felt that it fairly influences. This suggests that infrastructure and personnel attitudes are deemed important to varying degree by prisoners and prison officers.

The findings reveal a varied view on the factors influencing the choice and participation of prisoners in reformation programs. There is a clear consensus on the value of programmes that offer tangible benefits such as income generation and employment opportunities, alongside those fostering behavioural change and personal development. However, the variations in ratings, particularly from prisoners on factors related to emotional well-being, educational advancement, and the quality of facilities and staff relationships, highlight areas where expectations may not fully align with the experiences.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Assessment of reformation programmes at Kitengela Prison revealed that there are several vocational and formal education programmes available and are implemented to reform the prisoners. The vocational programmes include carpentry, plumbing, horticulture, masonry, welding, and leather work. The education

programmes majorly available and operational are Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) levels of education. It was also established that the operation of these programmes is above average. There is also in place psychological counselling for prisoners' psycho-social support, and ball games, music and dance for recreation.

The major factors that determine individual prisoners' placement on or choice of these programmes are the need to generate income to the government, and need for employment opportunities for prisoners upon release. Others are character and personality change, assistance in management of stress and strain of incarceration, the need for academic and spiritual development, availability of infrastructure, and instructors' friendliness.

To enhance the effectiveness of prisoners' reformation programmes, it is recommended that the Kenyan government should ensure that all the reformation programmes used in rehabilitation of prisoners in prison institutions should be fully operational, Kitengela Prison included. This is not the case as per the study findings on availability and implementation of the programmes. This can be achieved by controlling the challenges faced through provision of adequate capital and human resources.

Secondly, prisons department should introduce other marketable courses instead sole reliance on trade tests. The department should also partner with other institutions in training and employment of prisoners after discharge. In addition, the government and other stakeholders should provide prisoners with start-up tools and money as incentives on release for them to practice the skills learnt, this will go a long way in controlling recidivism.

Lastly, the challenges impeding implementation of prisoners' reformation programmes such as corruption, maladministration and mismanagement by concerned prison staff must also be eradicated.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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