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Examining the Challenges Hindering the Implementation of Community Service Sentencing for Offender Rehabilitation: Insights from Butimba Central Prison

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Globally, community service sentencing has been adopted as an alternative to incarceration to address prison congestion and enhance offender rehabilitation. In Tanzania, community service was introduced to reduce the overcrowding of prisons while promoting offender reintegration. This study aimed to examine the challenges of implementing community service sentencing for offender rehabilitation at Butimba Central Prison, Tanzania. The particular goals were to identify the significant factors that obstruct community service sentencing performance and explore potential solutions for improving its effectiveness. The study used the Restorative Justice Perspective as the theoretical framework and adapted the case study research design, data collected from 38 respondents through interviews and document review. Findings revealed systemic constraints, inadequate resources, weak legal enforcement, societal stigma, and stakeholder coordination as significant barriers to effective implementation. Other obstacles included inadequate monitoring mechanisms and community opposition, making rehabilitation difficult. The study proposed new policy initiatives, collaboration of the stakeholders, increased funding, and awareness creation to enhance the effectiveness of community service sentences. The study's conclusion emphasised the need for a comprehensive and sustainable framework to strengthen offender rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Jones (2022), the international approach to crime has long favoured rehabilitation and restorative justice practices. In Tanzania, this change has been signified by the introduction of community service sentencing as a substitute for custodial sentences. Community service sentences are designed to alleviate prison overcrowding while enhancing offenders' rehabilitation and social reintegration. However, the level of efficacy of this sentencing approach is highly affected by various factors experienced during the execution of the sentences, especially within correctional settings like Butimba Central Prison.

Like other developing countries, Tanzania deals with serious justice system obstacles, especially in managing the large prison population and the scant resources allocated for rehabilitation (Fundi & Nyamhanga, 2020). As a result, chronic overcrowding is observed in penal institutions, which leads to the absence of the necessary components of health care, vocational training, and rehabilitation that, in reality, defeat the purpose of community service sentencing (Human Rights Watch, 2020). These systemic issues must be resolved to ensure that community service as a sentence is adequately maintained and used as a substitute for imprisonment, improving the offender's rehabilitation process.

Various studies have focused on the barriers to rehabilitation within the imprisonment regimes. Legal barriers, lack of community involvement, budgetary limits, and social stigma are said to be the

most constraining aspects of rehabilitation (Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2016). Furthermore, insufficient control measures and follow-up programs for offenders on community service sentences enhance these problems, thus restricting rehabilitation measures (Commissioner's Report on Improving Criminal Justice Institutions in Tanzania, 2024).

Among the many aspects of implementing community service as a sentence is the involvement of social workers. Social workers serve as the points of entry for or ex-offenders within the community as they counsel, train, and involve them in community activities (Emprechtinger & Richter, 2023). However, social workers also have problems because of scarce resources, excessive workload, and lack of training regarding the rehabilitation of offenders (Reamer, 2020). These obstacles require attention if community service sentencing is to be more effective.

Cooperation among social workers, law enforcement, the judiciary, and other community organisations is essential for effective community service sentencing. Studies indicate that including restorative justice methods, mentoring, and systematic skill training within an integrated rehabilitation approach significantly facilitates reintegration (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Strengthening collaborations among these stakeholders can address the gaps that limit the efficacy of community service sentencing.

The legal and policy context surrounding community service sentencing in Tanzania also

significantly affects its success. Gaps in law, divergent sentencing patterns, and insufficient safeguarding measures contribute to the ineffectiveness of community service activities (Fundi & Nyamhanga, 2020). In addition, differences in judicial latitude, coupled with a lack of rehabilitation norms, result in inequitable treatment of offenders, which consequently undermines the impact of this sentencing strategy.

Alongside these factors, the presence or absence of rehabilitative programs and resources will influence the effectiveness of community service sentencing. Studies show that the absence of job training, counselling, and schooling for offenders under community service tends to correlate with higher rates of re-offending (Johnson et al., 2020). Fulfilling these gaps would allow more effective rehabilitation for offenders, and the offender may be better integrated into society in the longer term, in policymaking and correctional institutions.

Offender rehabilitation practices can be managed using restorative justice principles. These principles consider reconciliation, dialogue between the victim and offender, and community healing as paramount aspects of rehabilitation (Lead4Life, 2023). In Butimba Central Prison, restorative justice approaches within community service sentencing may allow offenders to accept responsibility for their actions, foster community acceptance, and decrease stigmatisation associated with reintegration into society.

Another significant issue is the absence of support systems for offenders after serving their sentence in community service settings. Numerous studies reveal that multiple ex-offenders have a challenging time attaining employment, appropriate housing, and societal acceptance after they have been incarcerated (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2020). Social workers are positioned at the forefront of efforts to advance policies targeting assistance to ex-offenders to mitigate recidivism and promote reintegration into society.

Rehabilitation programs often overlook the incorporation of a trauma-informed approach to address the emotional and psychological challenges of offenders successfully. Many of these community service-mandated offenders have experienced diverse traumatic events that, if left unaddressed, could threaten their rehabilitation process (Levenson, Prescott & Willis, 2023). Including trauma-informed care in community service sentencing strategies will significantly improve the rehabilitation process by addressing the psychological needs and coping skills of offenders.

While rehabilitation and restorative justice services are gaining traction, few studies have addressed the obstacles to community service sentence implementation in Tanzania. This study aims to tackle this gap in research by analysing the institutional challenges, socio-cultural factors, and policy limitations surrounding community service sentence practice at Butimba Central Prison. Hopefully, the findings will inform some aspects of criminal justice reform, policy formulation, and enhancement of rehabilitation services for community service order offenders in Tanzania.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study is based on Restorative Justice Theory (RJT) and seeks to understand the barriers to implementing community service sentences as a form of rehabilitation in Butimba Central Prison, Tanzania. RJT focuses on the harm inflicted during a crime and proposes to fix it through the inclusive participation of the offender, the victim, and the community (Zehr, 2002). It advocates for accountability, rehabilitation, and reintegration, which are essential for seeking community service sentencing. Braithwaite (2016) has noted RJT's effectiveness in reducing recidivism and other factors that negatively change the offender's attitude and behaviour. This study adopts RJT to investigate the barriers to implementing community service sentences and the influence of restorative approaches in addressing these barriers.

The service community lacks adequate resources and support, leading to minimal rehabilitation efforts. This goes hand in hand with RJT's argument claiming that an offender's reintegration is effective only when all participating actors work together, in this case, prisons, social workers, and the community. (Bazemore & Schiff, 2015) Offenders may find it challenging to reintegrate themselves in the absence of a significant restorative justice system, which then leads to them offending again. This study attempts to fill the gaps by exploring how principles of RJT can be utilised for effective community service sentences.

RJT states that offenders should participate in restitution and reconciliation processes to rectify the harm done (Zehr & Mika, 1998). However, in some cases, there is a community backlash in which stigma inhibits the reintegration of convicted persons undertaking community service sentences. This is similar to Daly's study (2017), where the negative perceptions of society act as additional hurdles for rehabilitation. This study aims to identify the structural and social factors that undermine the practical application of restorative justice philosophy in community service sentencing by studying these phenomena at Butimba Central Prison.

Recognising the contribution of social workers in promoting Compliance with community service punishment with the core values of RJT requires that they actively participate in the reconciliation processes, support offender reintegration, and provide necessary assistance (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2011). They also include engaging in the mediation of offenders with community members and creating conditions for dialogue acceptable for both parties to ensure accountability and behaviour change. Unfortunately, many lack the resources to do so, making it challenging to resolve the ongoing institutional scepticism toward rehabilitation programs.

Moreover, RJT argues that rehabilitation processes need to have the offender's voice primarily by

restoring bonds while considering the crime's impact on society (Strang & Braithwaite, 2017). There are, however, other barriers, such as low victim engagement in restorative practices and the absence of follow-up services, which block the full attainment of this principle. This report seeks to understand the effects of these barriers within prisons and suggest legislative changes to improve victim-offender mediation and community participation in rehabilitation.

Also, Sherman and Strang (2007) argue that supporting offenders through skill acquisition and education helps reduce recidivism among them. However, insufficient post-sentence vocational training, coupled with the absence of any post-sentence support, makes it difficult for offenders to obtain valuable market skills. These gaps place Prison in conflict with the fundamental principles of RJT, which support offering offenders tools to enable their successful reentry. It is important to fill these gaps by providing more extensive social work services and changing some policies to enhance rehabilitation efficacy.

RJT stresses that apart from economic resettlement, psychological rehabilitation is important for reducing recidivism (Van Ness & Heetderks Strong, 2015). Offenders usually grapple with some form of psychological suffering, like shame or loneliness, which may hinder their willingness to change. As part of restorative justice and social work, these counsellors seek to address some of these mental health issues. Unfortunately, these community service sentencing programs do not have adequate mental health resources, which significantly restricts the scope of rehabilitation, which requires an urgent policy change.

Another obstacle that affects the community service sentences using RJT is the overriding absence of legal support to achieve restorative justice in correctional policies (Gavrielides, 2015). Community service is supposed to be more rehabilitative than jail. However, it tends not to work because the law is poorly enforced, offenders

are poorly managed, and there is little partnership between the courts and the rehabilitation structures. This paper looks at the impact of the challenge of legal and institutional barriers on rehabilitation at Butimba Central Prison and suggests regulatory and institutional policy changes.

Furthermore, the outcome of RJT implementation depends significantly on the participation of the community in the reintegration process (Latimer et al., 2005). However, the scepticism exhibited by communities towards offenders tends to lead to ostracism and discrimination, which severely handicaps persons who have served community sentences. According to Rossner (2013), fostering community awareness complemented with restorative dialogues helps attenuate these negative perceptions. This study attempts to assess the level of community participation in the rehabilitation activities of Butimba Central Prison and suggests possible ways to improve community response.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study Area and Population

This research aimed to understand and analyse the problems linked to community service sentencing, particularly for corporal punishment and rehabilitation that are implemented using the Butimba Central Prison facilities. Policy issues, systemic issues, and the social construct of Tanzania affect the effectiveness of community service sentencing (Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020). The facility helped understand how offenders are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society using community service in the legal, institutional, and social contexts.

This approach helped the study determine the challenges correctional officers, social workers, and community service offenders face in applying restorative justice (Roberts & Springer, 2019). Such a focused and localised study provided a better understanding of the structural and functional challenges of the Tanzanian correctional paradigm and the effectiveness of the responses to

rehabilitation policies and practices (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). This study focused on finding the stakeholders' voices and formulating a community service policy that deals with rehabilitation practices.

Using a qualitative methodology, 38 participants participated in the investigation, including 15 community service offenders, 10 prison officers, six social workers, five judiciary representatives, and two District Administrative Secretary (DAS) office officers. This group provided community service offenders with a nuanced understanding of institutional and social issues that impeded community service sentencing. The study was comprehensive in that it sought the views of both the program administrators and the rehabilitation recipients.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The perspective of the community service offenders, social workers, prison officers, judiciary representatives, and the District Administrative Secretary (DAS) was considered, which made the study the vital components of the community service system. The information gathered gave an overview of obstacles to community service sentencing at Butimba Central Prison. Engaging this group of participants made it possible to broaden the scope of the issues and concerns that pertain to rehabilitation.

The exclusion criteria were set to eliminate irrelevant groups or topics that did not pertain to the study's goals. For instance, people beyond the scope of community service sentencing, including some inmates on custodial sentences or external participants who did not participate in rehabilitation programs, were left out. This maintained the central focus of the study and its intended objectives while enabling transparency, equity, and integrity of the study.

Study Design

The focus of the study was on the difficulties regarding the execution of community service for the convicts and the rehabilitation of offenders at Butimba Central Prison, which justified the usage of a case study research design. A case study design permits obtaining information regarding a phenomenon in an embedded context, essential in interpreting and addressing multidimensional social and organisational problems (Yin, 2018). This provided insight into the opinions of the important respondents, such as community service offenders, officers in charge of the prisons, social workers, judges, and District Administrative Secretary (DAS) officials, for a thorough understanding of the problem.

Data was obtained through interviews, renowned worldwide as one of the best strategies for capturing the lived experiences, perceptions, and insights from all the cohorts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study used interviews to collect sufficient qualitative data to better understand the underlying institutional and societal issues affecting the implementation of community service sentencing.

Sampling Procedure

The participants were selected based on their direct involvement and knowledge of Butimba Central Prison's community service sentencing. Participants were included and excluded based on their willingness and ability to participate in community-based rehabilitation for at least three months. This gave them adequate opportunity to participate in the rehabilitation process, which aimed to capture the main challenges and effectiveness of the sentencing program. Community service offenders were included to obtain views that cut across gender, age, and type of offence committed.

Social workers who actively participated in the planning, implementation, and supervision of community service rehabilitation programs were included. These social workers were drawn from various levels in correctional rehabilitation to help

them understand the different approaches and issues they encounter in assisting offenders.

Prison officers were included to focus on the administrative issues that may impede the proper implementation of community service sentencing. Preference was given to officers who supervise offenders under community service orders and those who coordinate rehabilitation programs.

In this study, the District Administrative Secretary (DAS) was included as a key informant so that they could shed light on any policy-related issues and administrative challenges concerning the implementation of community service. Further, personnel from the judiciary were also selected to explore other legal issues related to enforcement and the impact of community service sentencing. Judges and magistrates who exercised community service sentencing were selected to gauge how judicial discretion impacts the implementation and efficacy of the programs.

Data Collection

The primary data collection method involved interviewing community service offenders, prison officers, social workers, and judiciary staff. Their participants' experiences, belief systems, and issues encountered in community service sentencing were the aims of these interviews. It was noticed in the interviews that many participants used problematic circumvention techniques: lack of resources, poor infrastructure, stigmatisation, and little social work assistance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Movement restrictions other than these, for instance, the offender noted that community apathy made it difficult for them to accomplish work sentences promptly. Likewise, prison officers noted that the growing number of offenders made it increasingly difficult to supervise them because of the lack of personnel to assist in monitoring the offenders.

Document analysis meant looking at policy documents, program reports, case files, and intervention plans to cross-check data obtained from interviews and observations (Bowen, 2009). This

analysis assisted in locating certain structural deficiencies and gaps in the execution of community service sentencing. For instance, prison records showed variations in the duration of the sentences and the tasks that were set, which resulted in discrepancies in the treatment of offenders. Moreover, policy documents showed gaps regarding proper or adequate offender supervision, which made rehabilitation efforts unproductive.

The research was conducted with strict adherence to ethical considerations in guarding the participants' rights and the research's integrity. All participants were granted informed consent after explaining the study's objective, the voluntary nature, and withdrawal from participation (Fisher, 2017). To protect participants, the data collected was anonymised and securely stored. In addition, participants were also treated with cultural respect and were not offended in any manner during the contact. This study adhered to the ethical principles set forth by Chalmers et al. (2013), Fisher (2017), the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), and the prison and institutional research guidelines.

This study used a multi-method approach to explain the difficulties of executing community service sentencing at Butimba Central Prison. Keyword interviews and document analysis provided the study with an understanding of the systemic, institutional, and social problems in the offender rehabilitation process. The analysis and findings are important to other stakeholders, including policymakers, prison managers, and social workers, trying to enhance the effectiveness of community service sentencing in Tanzania.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Thematic Analysis

This study used thematic virtual analysis to understand data derived from interviews and document reviews focusing on issues that impede the practice of community service sentencing within

Butimba Central Prison. It facilitated a comprehensive examination of multifaceted aspects of offenders' rehabilitation processes (Braun Case Inpoint & Clarke, 2006). The social, institutional, economic, and professional obstacles and the functions of social workers as the key mitigators of these problems were analysed.

The data generated through coding and categorisation analysis revealed several themes. One primary theme was institutional barriers that comprise neglect, poor supervision of offenders, and poor logistics for coordinating the placement of offenders for attendance at community service. Another was the obvious stigmatisation and social rejection that served as barriers to offenders' reintegration into society. Furthermore, the offenders' economic reintegration difficulties, like not having stable employment, not being adequately trained, or having access to sufficient job opportunities, were also apparent.

The analysis also showed how social workers contributed to solving some of the problems by offering counselling, skills training, and even lobbying for improved rehabilitation policies. Social workers were active in the offender's reintegration process by providing psychosocial support alongside training geared towards skill enhancement. In addition, the study also assessed the program's effectiveness in terms of community service sentencing and its impact on recidivism and rehabilitation. The results have shown that despite community service as an alternative to imprisonment, there were apparent systemic failures, such as a lack of proper integration of correctional services with the community (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In any case, the main result is that thematic analysis allowed for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges in using community service as a form of sentencing. The study presented the systemic and socio-economic problems that affected offenders and paid special attention to

social workers' efforts to improve rehabilitation by searching for skilled employment services.

FINDING PRESENTATION

Institutional Factors Hindering the Implementation of Community Service Sentencing for Offender Rehabilitation

The first theme that emerged from the study is the institutional factors that impede effective community service sentencing as a means of offender rehabilitation. The study pointed to several institutional challenges that prevent the successful implementation of community service programs. Butimba Central Prison experiences several obstacles in adopting community service sentencing as a rehabilitation measure. These obstacles arise from a lack of funds, poor staffing, and low coordination levels among institutions, negative public attitudes, restrictive training opportunities, logistical challenges, and legal and policy gaps. These challenges must be dealt with to improve the impact of community service sentencing in rehabilitating offenders and reintegrating them into society.

Inadequate funding has proven to be one of the biggest challenges, as the lack of money significantly impacts the rehabilitation systems. The prison's budget does not allow for the upkeep of the prison community service workshops, nor does it permit the purchase of vocational supplies that directly enable productive workshop participation. There is also a lack of suitably qualified personnel like social workers and rehabilitation workers, which makes supervision and guidance for offenders who may be performing community service nearly impossible. This issue is noted by one participant, stating that:

"Community service activities are pegged on a budget, which is problematic for a service as sensitive as the prison. There are also a few adults and resources to cater for proper supervision, which makes training for rehabilitation programs ineffective."

Poor communication between the judicial authorities, correctional institutions, and the community has also proven to be a significant challenge. Inter-agency cooperation is needed if an order of community service is to be effective. Such collaboration would guarantee the designation of proper and sufficient work for the offenders serving community sentences. On the flip side, a lack of proper guidance, supervision, monitoring, and inadequate resources results in the ineffective implementation of community service programs.

In addition, negative community attitudes and lack of acceptance impede the successful implementation of community service sentencing. Many residents and nearby business proprietors tend to shun rehabilitation services out of fear of the rehabilitation branding and other associated issues. That negative perception has paralysed community action; therefore, work for offenders is scarce, aggravating the difficulty of reentry into society. One participant noted:

"The offender is usually positioned in a community where his trust is in doubt, making it hard for the offender to be constructively employed. In the absence of community endorsement, the objective of rehabilitating through community service is very elusive."

In the same way, lacking resources for vocational and other skills training support makes it challenging to achieve community service sentencing. Many offenders need to be trained in productive areas of community services and for their employment needs when released. However, because adequate resources and learning opportunities are not available at Butimba Central Prison, a good number of these offenders serve the last parts of their sentences with no skills to show, which defeats the essence of community service as a rehabilitation tool.

Administrative and logistical challenges further complicate the smooth operation of community service sentencing. Factors such as lack of transport,

ineffective record maintenance, and unsophisticated scope procedures for planning and executing community service work are some of the reasons for these inefficiencies. These problems exacerbate the challenges prison authorities face in monitoring offenders' movements, ensuring accountability, and measuring the success of community service productivity. Such was the case for one participant who described:

"There is a significant lack of transport and coordination, which has made proper community service allocation very difficult. Geographical and structural barriers make offender supervision, tracking, and management much more complex as well as inefficient."

Legal and policy gaps in knowledge competency in applying community service sentences make implementing them more challenging. Some legal gaps regarding community service do not allow it to function smoothly as an alternative sentencing option, causing variation in its utilisation. Also, lacking policies for the offenders' supervision, reintegration, and follow-up does not enhance the sustainability of community service as a rehabilitation strategy.

A key issue of concern is the broad discretionary authority given to the officer in charge as stated in Section 52A (1) of the Prisons Act No. 34/1967 (R.E. 2002). This provision enables the officer to decide whether a prisoner may be offered community service without any minimum term sentence or particular criteria selection. Such a lack of instructions threatens the uniformity and equity of the decision-making process. As one participant expressed:

"The absence of precise legal definitions that indicate who is fit to enjoy community service leads to capsized results. Some offenders are given community service, and others are not are placed under similar conditions."

Another critical deficiency concerns the practice of bias or favouritism in the selection criteria of the prisoners. The absence of legal provisions that provide monitoring structures or justifications for decisions made by the officer in charge puts him/her at a great risk of being biased. The inflexibility of these provisions gives rise to unfair treatment, and the absence of transparency negates the entire purpose of community service sentencing, which should be a reasonable and restorative substitute for incarceration. As one participant put it:

"The selection of individuals who are to be served community service does not account for some transparency, and using lack of monitoring breeds corruption as a means of coming to those peers who should not have gotten that chance."

Moreover, the law does not provide for an appeal of a decision regarding the denial of community service for prisoners.

The lack of an appeal mechanism makes a review virtually impossible, negatively impacting their rehabilitation chance. This could be solved by implementing a formal appeals review process, which increases responsibility and ensures that all rulings are made willingly and for valid reasons. One participant shared:

"Because there is no set way for people in prisons to contest rejections of requests for community service, it is easy to claim the process lacks equity and is arbitrary."

Furthermore, the absence of appropriate file documentation concerning determinations of eligibility for community service or program participation is an obstacle to evaluating this community service. There is no way to tell who was selected, so there is no way to measure whether the process is being carried out fairly or can meet rehabilitation goals. One participant noted:

"Lack of proper documentation on eligibility decisions would also make it impossible to

evaluate the fairness and quality of the process in question. And over time, improvements to the system will be impossible. "

Additionally, the law does not unambiguously address how communal services would be assigned or supervised, which could result in problems in enforcement if there are no criteria to specify what services are to be performed, how and to what extent they are to be performed, or who is to supervise them, there are bound to be lapses in responsibility and effectiveness.

Domestic Policies would help define the process for ensuring that community service serves a rehabilitative purpose and corresponds with the offender's skills and reintegration needs.

Though Section 52A(1) of the Prisons Act seeks to enable community service sentencing in place of incarceration, its broad discretionary provisions and lack of oversight mechanisms create potential gaps for abuse. To address these legal and policy gaps, amendments that set minimum eligibility requirements, an appeals process, documentation, and proper supervision are needed. Such changes would improve the community service sentencing processes at Butimba Central Prison by making them more open and effective.

In any case, Butimba Central Prison has to deal with many problems, such as inadequate funds, insufficient coordination, negative perception from the public, lack of vocational training, poor logistics, and rest and policy issues. Solving these problems will require more funding, better cooperation between different bodies, and greater public awareness, training, and policies. All these will help improve the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders through community service sentencing.

The Role of Community Perception in the Success or Failure of Community Service Programs

Perception of the community dramatically determines the success or failure of community service programs that aim at rehabilitating offenders. How society perceives a person serving a community sentence dramatically affects their chances of acceptance, opportunities, and overall rehabilitation process. One of the primary challenges associated with negative community perception is stigma and discrimination. A large number of offenders face bias from people in the community who primarily view them as criminals rather than people who require rehabilitation. This societal bias poses serious challenges to securing jobs, decent housing, and social life, thus creating problems for their reintegration into society. One of the participants narrated:

"Persons serving community sentences face substantial stigma and discrimination, making it quite difficult for them to attain gainful employment and even reintegrate into society. The perception that they are still criminals poses great challenges for new beginnings to be attained."

An equally important problem conditioned by community attitudes is the willingness of different business entities and institutions to employ people who have served their jail time. Some employers may hold back on hiring ex-offenders based on concerns about their reliability, trustworthiness, and even the public's perception of the former offenders.

An absence of job openings impedes the economic well-being of able individuals and amplifies their chances of reoffending, ultimately defeating the purpose of community service schemes. Additionally, negative attitudes from the community can affect the family reintegration process and social ties. Most offenders are shunned by their families and other social groups after serving their sentences, which leads them to a state of increased loneliness and psychological turmoil. The lack of such a social safety net can disincentive them from actively participating in rehabilitation

and positively impacting society. One participant remarked:"

"Upon serving my community sentence, I intended to be reintegrated with my family and the rest of the community. To my surprise, I was shunned and left alone, making it especially hard to reconstruct my life and abide by positive ways of living."

In contrast, more constructive community attitudes can mitigate the shortcomings of rehabilitation programs. When the public perceives community service as an accurate and valuable form of punishment, it creates a setting where offenders are permitted a new opportunity to start afresh. These communities that forward the idea of rehabilitation as opposed to punishment make it easier to secure jobs, mentorship, and even grants, all of which go a long way in decreasing recidivism.

Communities' participation in rehabilitation programs is determined by how they perceive them. In communities where people appreciate the value of community service, there tends to be greater collaboration among local organisations, businesses, and correctional institutions. Such collaboration can improve training, mentorship, and reintegration programs, all essential for rehabilitative work. One such participant stood out.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the different themes reveals that institutional barriers to offender rehabilitation through community service sentences within the Restorative Justice Theory (Zehr, 2002) are challenging.

The first theme captures the institutional factors blocking attempts to implement community service at Butimba Central Prison adequately. Butimba Central Prison has these factors because of poorly funded programs, understaffing. Societal attitudes towards vocational training, coupled with poor logistics, policy, and legal loopholes, aggravate the situation further. These obstacles, if addressed, can

improve offender supervision, thereby enhancing community policing after serving a prison sentence.

The various barriers to comprehensive rehabilitation include insufficient funding and other resources for prison rehabilitation programs. The prison suffers from budgetary cuts that do not allow the facility to build proper infrastructure, vocational training centres, or even acquire the tools to carry out meaningful service work. Furthermore, the lack of staff and rehabilitation officers trained in social work to supervise offenders worsens the situation (Thompson, 2019). Participants pointed out that financial barriers reduce the standard of supervisors, coaches, and desks, which is essential in helping community-served individuals get empowered.

Another critical problem is the lack of proper alignment between judicial authorities, correctional facilities, and community stakeholders. Effective community service sentencing requires inter-agency cooperation at all levels to ensure the allocation and supervision of offenders to specific tasks. Unfortunately, fragmentation of casework, lack of communication, and logistical problems cause inefficiencies and delays in executing community service programs. These institutional obstacles weaken the restorative objectives of offender reintegration by impairing the effectiveness and efficiency of rehabilitation activities (Thompson, 2019).

In addition, low levels of community acceptance and stigma can impede the effective imposition of community service sentences. Many community members, along with local business proprietors, do not actively engage in rehabilitation because of the stigma attached to interacting with ex-offenders. This type of stigma negatively impacts community participation and increases the difficulty of reintegration for offenders, which poses more challenges than employment support (Mandiberg, 2010; Raymond et al., 2018). The participants noted that the attitude of many people in the community is adversely negative towards offenders, making it very difficult to obtain suitable placements for

offenders. There seem to be not enough signs of support from the community to enable the achievement of rehabilitation through community service.

Access to vocational training and skill development programs is often unavailable, significantly impacting community service sentencing fulfilment. Offenders need to be trained in productive community service activities and skills that will help them become employable during reintegration. Unfortunately, low training resources and facilities aggravate the situation. Many offenders serve sentences without acquiring valuable skills, which diminishes the effectiveness of community service as a rehabilitation method. Zehr, in 2002, notes that Restorative Justice Theory posits rehabilitation must include graded community involvement and skill acquisition, which services community service sentencing is meant to achieve. However, these stipulations defeat the purpose of rehabilitation (Zehr, 2002).

Administrative tasks and the overall management of community service sentencing are deeply flawed. Inadequate guidelines on transport, recording, and allocation of duties fail to achieve targets on record. For prison officials, these barriers create problems in supervising the achieved changes and accounting for the offenders in the community service programs. Respondents mentioned significant logistical issues, such as a lack of transport and poor coordination of community service, which result in insufficient monitoring and program ineffectiveness.

The lack of adequate policies about the supervision of offenders makes clear legal barriers in the imposition of rehabilitation and community service orders. This makes the sentence ineffective in achieving its desired objectives. How an officer in charge approaches the community service sentence is a challenge. One has to be concerned about the vast discretion given to the officer in charge under Section 52A (1) of the Prisons Act No. 34/1967 (Revised Edition, 2002). The officer can decide

whether a prisoner is suitable to be placed on community service. However, the law does not provide a set minimum sentence nor any selection criteria to consider. The absence of defined selection criteria creates ambiguity and raises concerns about equity in the decisions made on the criteria set (Thompson, 2019).

Another key concern is the possibility of bias and favouritism in the selection process. Since these officers are not required to justify any of their decisions, there is a possible abuse of power through discrimination and unfair treatment. Failing to provide such oversight mechanisms may defeat the purpose of imposing community service as a sentence - a constructive punishment that is less harsh than imprisonment. Furthermore, there is no provision within the law to challenge the refusal of community service on appeal. The existence of such decision-making power without the ability to appeal creates slanted decisions that further hinder the rehabilitation of prisoners. Providing justifiable grounds for appealing certain decisions would increase accountability and the overall fairness of the legal system.

In addition, there is also a gap in the legal framework, which states that there is no prescribed method for allocating specific community service tasks along with supervision. Lack of clear guidelines regarding the scope of community service work, time required, and supervision leads to inefficiencies. Such abuse of power where there is no set, precisely defined policies, such abuse should be defined, and community service should be balanced on the skills of the offender and his chances for rehabilitation.

To align with the Restorative Justice Theory (Zehr, 2002), systemic changes are required to increase the efficacy of community service sentencing in rehabilitating offenders. These changes include policy shifts that improve legal clarity and enforcement, rehabilitation program funding and resource allocation, and collaboration between correctional facilities, government bodies, and

community groups to develop supportive networks for reintegration. Moreover, campaigns on stigma reduction and rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders will assist in shifting public perception. Increased monitoring and evaluation of community service programs will also ensure they effectively achieve a lowered reoffending rate and a balanced societal order.

Still, Prison faces many challenges in using community service sentencing, such as financial limitations, lack of coordination, public discrimination, lack of effective vocational instruction, logistical obstacles, and weak policies. Overcoming these obstacles will demand public campaigns, increased funding, enhanced interagency collaboration, improved training, and policies that change the perception of community service. These elements can potentially achieve offenders' successful rehabilitation and reintegration using the community service paradigm for Restorative Justice and significantly curtail recidivism.

CONCLUSION

The examination executed at Butimba Central Prison investigates the difficulties that obstruct the execution of community service sentences for offender rehabilitation by highlighting the systemic challenges that reduce its efficacy. Through the participants' accounts, the study demonstrates the legal, structural, and cultural barriers that block the achievement of rehabilitation, thus calling for action in the form of policy changes and precise strategies. Some focal challenges were identified as inadequate funding, insufficient legal resources, ineffective cooperation among different agencies, and the poor provision of community service activities.

Moreover, the study investigates how the community views offenders and reveals that negative attitudes, stigma, and lack of information result in the social rejection and marginalisation of these individuals, making it even harder for successful reintegration. Findings also highlight the

challenges of Butimba Central prison, as one of the correctional facilities, in providing the requisite supervision for the proper community service sentence due to a lack of resources, personnel, and facilities. To overcome such challenges, there is an urgent need for policy changes, allocation of more financial resources, and collaboration among different stakeholders of the community, correctional facilities, and policymakers.

The current attention to building a systematic approach to improvements calls for proactive rehabilitation strategies, stronger stakeholder engagement, and practices geared toward enhancing the efficacy of community service sentencing. Improving these components will help minimise recidivism and improve the reintegration of offenders as restorative justice is achieved. Addressing these challenges and achieving systemic changes is necessary to ensure that community service sentencing is more effective than traditional forms of imprisonment, employing a more modern and forgiving approach to justice practices.

Recommendation for Improvement

The following considerations can be made towards better enabling community service sentencing as an effective tool for offender rehabilitation:

Dedicating More Resources for Strategic Improvements—The Government can make budgetary provisions to provide appropriate accommodation, staffing, training, and other measures for institutions dealing with community service sentencing.

Providing More Comprehensive Legal Policies—Policymakers need to examine current policies on community service sentencing to close any legal loopholes and improve implementation.

Improving Evaluation and Internal Auditing Processes—to improve the outcome, Compliance and rehabilitation effectiveness of community service programs must be met regularly and

evaluated internally. Monitoring the Problems Effectively and compliance improves.

Empowering Stakeholders—Create training sessions for judicial officers, probation officers, and social workers to equip them better to deal with community service offenders.

Public Awareness Activities—to ensure societal support for offender reintegration, the Public perception of community service sentencing should be addressed through community engagement and sensitisation programs.

Fostering Stakeholder Cooperation—a more comprehensive approach to offender rehabilitation requires Better liaison among the judiciary, correctional institutions, social welfare services, and community leadership.

Overcoming Socioeconomic Integration Barriers—Offenders should undergo vocational training and job placement as part of their community service sentence to help them acquire important skills and lower their recidivism rates.

Providing Psychological and Social Aid—Counselling and mentorship programs should be designed and implemented to help offenders with psychological and social challenges during and after their sentences.

These suggestions will improve the rehabilitation of offenders through community service sentences at Butimba Central Prison. They will also enhance rehabilitation efforts, facilitate the reintegration process, and invariably reduce the rate of repeat offences within the correctional system in Tanzania.

Suggestions for Future Study and Interventions

Further analysis should focus on the impacts of social work practices on the rehabilitation and recidivism of people subjected to a community service sentence over an extended period. The study could investigate the effects on the perpetrator's successful societal participation and non-recidivism under sustained support through case management,

occupational, and psychological therapy. The effects on social reintegration are crucial for evaluating the social worker's long-term impact, if any, in facilitating a malleable and softer society.

Similarly, social workers need support in exceptional service provision to ex-offenders through building local partnerships with business entities, educational facilities, and social agencies. Further work is conducive to enhancing resource distribution and policy adaptation regarding community service sentences. Future research can also address the challenge of improving the financing, human resources, and other necessary infrastructure to assist social workers and improve the rehabilitation outcome.

Further research will be needed to develop a strategy for implementing evidence-based practices focusing on offenders with community service sentences. Additional studies can be done to modify the components of a rehabilitation program in terms of mental health, addictions, employment, and even family relationships. Such approaches will increase the chances for successful rehabilitation outcomes by developing more sophisticated and integrated rehabilitation plans.

By targeting these studies and interventions, Butimba Central Prison will be able to strengthen its rehabilitation programs further and enhance the results for persons sentenced to community service, making communities safer and more resilient.

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