

Substance use disorders among female offenders in the Criminal Justice System in East Africa

Faridah Nakoma and Kennedy Amone-P'Olak
Department of Psychology, Kyambogo University

The Art Of Healing

24-28 June 2024

Thessaloniki, Greece



The problem

A significant proportion of women who face incarceration in the criminal justice system (CJS) have Substance Use Disorders (SUD).



Men make up the majority of inmates (> 85%)

Studies on the prison population focus mainly on males and neglect women

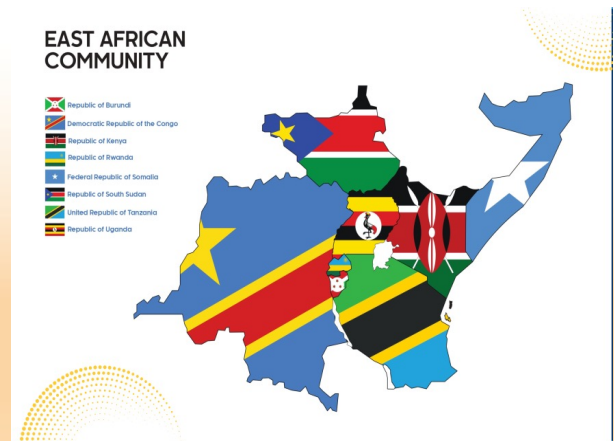
SUD is a significant contributor to crime among women (UNODC)



Aim

To assess SUDs among female offenders in East Africa

➔ Inform practice, policy, research and theory



Why women?

Female inmates vs. general population: 2 – 4 times more likely to have a mental problem

Twice as many as men

Studies on SUDs among female offenders may inform interventions to reduce incarceration of women and penal reforms (and/men) in prisons.



UNODC, 2014



What did we do?

- Google Scholar,
- PsycInfo,
- Scopus, etc.

Research studies published between 2014 and 2023

*About 40 studies found; half didn't have relevant data
Eliminated studies of imprisonment due to drug trade
or focused on males only.*



Search terms

Prison* or jail* or
offender* or
criminal* or
inmate* or
correction* or
penitentiary*

Substance* or
drug* or alcohol*
or mental* or
psychiatry* or
psycho*

Africa* or
Burundi* or
Congo* or Kenya*
or Rwanda* or
Somali* or South
Sudan* or
Tanzania* or
Uganda*



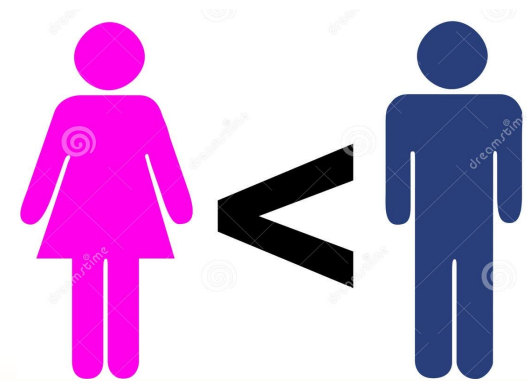
Findings

Women make up the smaller proportion of offenders 3 - 6.5%

Studies ignore them because of small numbers

Typically come from lower socio-economic and dysfunctional backgrounds

- Education
- Employment
- Early motherhood



Majority of the reports on female offenders focus on mental health in general



Little or no emphasis on SUDs among female offenders.



A small number of the reviewed studies mentioned social and psychological interventions for SUDs, none of which were specific to female offenders



	Prison studies	Female offenders %	ATIs*
Burundi	X	4.8	X
Congo	X	3	X
Kenya	✓	5.3	✓ ✓
Rwanda	✓	6.4	X
S.Sudan	X	5.3	✓
Somalia	✓	N/A	✓
Tanzania	✓	3.4	✓ ✓
Uganda	✓	4.2	✓
		<i>World prison brief, 2015</i>	<i>Barton et al, 2021</i>

Conclusion

There is little information regarding women and SUDs in East African prison populations, despite UNODC's emphasis on substance abuse as a key contributor to crime among women.

i



Conclusion

- Further research is needed to determine the drivers of SUDs among women in the CJS in East Africa; e.g. past trauma, socio-cultural issues
- Gender sensitive CJS to support female offenders' needs (mental health, sexual and reproductive health issues and complications – HIV, pregnancy, postnatal care, breast feeding, children of women prisoners)



References

doi: 10.7189/jogh.12.04054	https://academicworks.cuny.edu/jj_pubs/465
prisonstudies .org	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-018-0170-6
2014_WHO_UNODC_Prisons_and_Health_eng.pdf	https://doi.org/10.1192/S1749367600004501
DOI: 10.1111/add.16170	DOI: https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.6.1.1444
DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2015.1122345	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-019-0200-z
https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-019-0273-z	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-019-2167-7
https://doi.org/10.1177/11782218221101011	AJCS, Vol.13, ISSN 1554-3897
DOI: 10.1093/epirev/mxx018	DOI: 10.1177/0093854813514405
doi:10.1097/QAI.0000000000000624	https://doi.org/10.2147/SAR.S409944
www.ijhsr.org ISSN: 2249-9571	RES94G6_8153.pdf
http://dx.doi.org/10.7448/IAS.19.1.20873	doi: 10.7189/jogh.12.04054
https://www.eac.int/overview-of-eac	Lancet Glob Health 2019;7:e461-71



Thank you for listening

nakomafaridah@gmail.com

fnakoma@kyu.ac.ug

