

Addis Ababa university
School of Graduate Studies
Institute of Gender Studies

A STUDY OF WOMEN PRISONERS IN
KIMBIBITI AND DEBERE-BIRHAN
PRISONS

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Abstract

This research paper tries to see the living situation of women in Kimbibiti and Debre-Birhan prisons. It mainly assesses the suitability of prisons for women prisoners in terms of the prisoners in terms of the privacy they get while they are imprisoned, personal hygiene issues, medical service, nutrition, vocational training, and delivery of rehabilitation programmes. It also assesses the causes of committing crime for selected women inmates. Lastly, it tries to examine problems encountered during their stay at prison.

Like men, there are so many reasons for women commit crime and contribute to the tariff of most offence categories. Women commit all offence categories. Some of the well known offences women commit are theft, infanticide, homicide, robbery, perjury, and abortion. However fewer women than men are coming to the criminal justice system. Women face multiples of problems while they are living in the prison community. The situation in the prison community does not totally fit to women in most cases since the system long time ago . They do not take women's needs into consideration when they were built. Due to this fact many of the prisons and the situations in it are male oriented and designed for men.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The problem and Its Approach

1.1. Background

Difficulties are encountered when attempting to define crime all at once. If the definition is a true one, it should enable us to recognize whether an act is a crime or not. Furthermore, what is considered as crime in one area may not be a crime in other place. Some literatures have defined crime in light of the modern and primitive times.

As has been stated by Harold (1969), crime in earlier times has been defined as: "a violation of some eternal law set by gods, nature, or reasons."

Crime in modern time has been defined with regard to the sociological and legal point of view.

To sociologists, "crime is an anti-social behavior. To them it is not enough to provide that an act or omission as crime under criminal law. The offence as well should be against the morality of the society and it should be serious enough to affect society at large." (Harold 1969)

"To lawyers crime is a behavior in violation of criminal law. The immorality, offensiveness, and guiltiness of the act or omission are not enough to constitute crime unless it is prohibited by criminal law."(Ibid)

From both systems, the general concept of crime could be understood as omission in violation of criminal law or any social harm defined and made punishable by law. (Glover, 1992)

As it is mentioned in the thesis written by Aysheshim, (1987), crime as a source of social evil emerged from biblical times. As the socio-economic situation changed, the nature, and techniques of crime changed and the state formulated ways and means to cope with the new wave of criminals.

As Aysheshim indicated that, the fundamental nature of crime is its anti-social character. An act becomes crime because the state considers it to be anti-social. Due to that, the penal system, which is the sum total of all those measures of punishment taken by the state to protect the society against anti-social behavior was established.

The criminal, thus, as some one who deviates from the accepted norms of the society being a threat to the society, should be subjected to punishment by the criminal justice system. (Ibid)

Since crime is a wrong deed against the society and the state, the punishment process always exists. The idea of punishment is plain; the person who has committed a wrong must suffer in return. The purpose of punishment is to discourage a person from committing crime again. Punishment is supposed to reduce criminal behavior acting as a threat to the individual. Imprisonment and loss of income is a major hardship to many people. Another way of influencing choice is to make crime a difficult act to commit. The state, through the help of various institutions takes different measures of punishment. Among these

institutions, prisons are the major ones and are allowed to punish the individual who has violated the criminal law.

As indicated by Aysheshim, the basic aim of placing the offender in a prison is for the purpose of punishment, deterrence, and reform. Accordingly, a prison is a place where criminals are kept for punishment and a prisoner is a person who is confined in prison or kept in custody. (Aysheshim, 1987)

1.2 Statement of the problem

Women being part and parcel of the society commit crime as a result of the problems they face. They can be found in all offence categories and remain in prisons.

As it is cited by Harold (1969) "Some of the well-known offence types in which women participate are theft, infanticide, homicide, robbery, perjury, and abortion." (Harold, 208)

But the offences committed by the sexes differ markedly in the frequency and seriousness and in the respective social consequences of being labeled as offenders.

According to Harold, the lower female crime rate, as well as the less serious nature of female involvement in crime, results in proportionality fewer women than men coming in contact with the criminal justice system.

To him, fewer women in the criminal justice system mean less adequate facilities and services for female offenders. (Harold, 1969)

Moreover, prisons are set up to deal with the public crime of the male society therefore; women don't fit in the system. Consequently, women are not provided the same opportunities for accommodation. The size and location of the prisons frequently restricts the number of training in which they can participate. Moreover, these prisons fail to provide women with the same range of medical services that are available to men. Due to this fact, the attention given to women in prison is extremely limited. They became disadvantaged mainly in terms of infrastructure facilities such as dormitories, clinics, and lavatory. They also lack any form of education or training. (Ibid)

According to Harold, not only are women subjected to these unfavorable conditions but they are unable to maintain a solid relationship with their families, including very young children. (Harold: 1969)

But there is no doubt that the suffering and the pains of a child is first and foremost felt and shared by mothers than anybody else. In addition, mothers worry very much about the children whom they have left at home while they are at prison. Therefore this study will attempt on assessing the conditions of prisons for women criminals. Moreover it tries to single out major factors for the commission of crime and its impacts on the social and economic status of women in the aforementioned prison.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the living conditions of women in prisons and to examine the causes for committing crimes.

The specific objectives include:

- to assess the suitability of prisons for women in terms of privacy, personal hygiene, medical service, nutrition, and rehabilitation programmes and
- to assess the causes of committing crime for selected women inmates.

1.4 Research Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative analysis is the methodology used to undertake this research. In addition, an in-depth interview in conjunction with focus group discussion and questionnaire was used to generate detailed information about the situations in the respective prisons. The interview was conducted using open-ended questions that allowed participants to fully express their feelings and opinions freely.

The writer used these methods in order to substantiate the findings and for confirmation of the same information by different methods or sources and to increase the validity of the results.

Non-quantifiable data such as information from open ended questions, key informant interviews, and focused group discussion were analyzed through qualitative method and the data was analyzed through descriptive way. On the other hand, SPSS were used for coding, compiling, analyzing the quantitative data collected. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistical tools, such as frequency, distribution, and percentage

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are significant in the following two ways. First, the study contributes to knowledge on how prisons are treating women criminals and the problems women criminals face at prisons. Second, the study contributes in allowing us to understand what causes women to commit crimes. Thirdly, the study provides relevant information to inform policy makers and program implementers on interventions in treating women offenders.

1.6 Limitations and Scope of the Research

Due to its nature, prison research is problematic. Difficulties are encountered upon getting entry permission from the officers and the gate keepers. For both prisons it was required to get entry permission from Oromia and Amhara Regional Government Prisons Commissioner Offices.

The other challenge in this research was the use of multilingual interview. The problem in this regard is that, translating the original language into Amharic and then to English. These limited the full sense and could not capture the full essence of women's expressions in their own languages. Additionally, it was also difficult to fully capture the message that was being transmitted by body language.

It is believed that there are so many issues of women prisoners that could be assessed in all prisons. However, due to its wide nature it is difficult to assess situations in all prisons. Therefore, the researcher is forced to delimit the study only to two prisons: Debre-Birhan and Kimbibit

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

2.1 Causes for Women Criminality

There are many contributing factors that lead women to criminal activities and behavior. These contributing factors can be present throughout the criminal's life, yet may not be noticed. Many of them are associated with the way they were raised and it gradually worsens as they get older. However, involvement in crime is the outcome of economic, social, and biological pressures no matter how weak response it is.

2.1.1 Biological Cause

As it is indicated in Heidensohn, theories suggested that women's criminal behavior were to be found in women's innate, biologically and genetically determined nature. In other words, they explain views of female crimes as stemming from biological causes. Most focused on sex specific biological difference as explanation for particular kinds of activity. Hence, they linked women's criminality to "maleness" and "masculine" as traits such as aggression and physicality were often seen in men rather than in women. Therefore, the female offender who was seen as exhibiting male traits was considered doubly deviant both socially and biologically. She was an exception to the usual sex of the offender, and as a woman, she went against her biological nature and thus was not fully female. (Heidensohn (1985)

In addition, they argued that women were biologically programmed not to commit crimes, if a woman was what they termed a born criminal, then she must be biologically closer to the male sex. They considered most female criminals to be petty, occasional offenders drawn into crime by the encouragement of men, their inability to resist temptation and their lesser respect for property (Ibid)

On the other hand Pollack discussed female criminality in terms of physiological differences between the sexes. In this case, women conceal their offending behavior and thus have lower rates of report and detention than males and use their sexuality to attain mercy from the police and courts. According to Pollack women do this because their nature is inherently deceitful and manipulative. He further says that the nature of women is linked to their physiological make up, in that women are capable of concealing their sexuality arousal unlike men and thus in most intimate human acts they have the opportunity and ability to manipulate those around them.(Pollack 1988)

Whatever interpretation is given to women's act of violence, it is evident that women are fascinated in the roles shaped by male dominant society and it is due to the unavailability of the women's condition that they route to violent crimes. This is similar to the cases of Ethiopian women prisoners.

2.1.2 Sociological Cause

As it is discussed by Pollack (1988) a common way to explain female crime is with respect in which men and women are socialized. According to him, some theories study deviance or delinquency as a form of acting out. It is stated that women have been socialized to be passive and needing affection and care. Therefore, the society wants women to have one line, which is predetermined.

However, this predetermined line often is not the choice of women. Rather it is imposed on women starting from childhood within the family and reinforced through the daily life of the society. The repeatedly injected burden on women might make them think of their rights, try to tackle the problem, struggle more, and take off the burden. Through this process usually women happen to commit crimes, that is, they may do an act in violation of those duties, which an individual owes to the community (Pollack, 1988)

In this regard, a study by Mintwab Zelelew (2000) has indicated the following. The victims of women's violence are husbands, co-wives, infants, and step children. She further stated that women's violent crimes are a consequence of their in patriarchal societies. She also reveals that violent crime as a type of resistance by women against specific oppressive gender relations within the family.

The same reason is forwarded by Pollack (1988). The writer explains that "embodied in women's violent crime is an objection against patriarchal societies oppression." In addition, patriarchal values suppress a women's personal identity and in the struggle against self-expressive roles a woman may turn to violence. Pollack consistently emphasizes the importance of social and environmental factors, including poverty, crowded living conditions, broken homes, and delinquent companions.

According to Mahon (1998), women's delinquent behavior is the outcome of alienation, which produces strains within the women whose social environment imposes conflicting, confusing, and impossible demands without providing the opportunities to meet them.

In another work Martin, et.al (1996) has indicated that crime is essentially a lower class phenomenon. The writer explained that a subculture exists with in a lower class that results in high rates of delinquency. Delinquent sub-cultures arise due to the lower class inability to meet standards as set out by the dominant middle-class culture such as obtaining education, material success, neatness, punctuality. (Ibid)

In this regard, Martin, S. and Jurik (1996) stated that reasons for committing crime include greed, anger, jealousy, revenge, or pride. The desire for material gain money or expensive belongings leads to property crimes such as robberies, burglaries, and auto thefts. The desire for control, revenge, or power leads to violent crimes such as murders, assaults, and rape. (Ibid)

2.1.3 Economical Cause

Poverty was another factor that contributed to the prevalence of crime among females. According to Heidensohn, (1985) among the various types of crimes in which women are involved the most widely and repeatedly committed types are those crimes which are results of poverty and related to property like theft, robbery, and shoplifting. Most of the perpetrators of such crimes are those who are at low economic standards.

They take committing crimes as one means of tackling the problems they face. For example, a mother in order to feed her children, in order to avoid seeing them beg on the streets or see them dying chooses to steal. (Ibid)

The economic explanation of women criminality has to do with the general societal structure of a given country. In developing countries, where women are

to a great extent dependant on their husbands or are engaged in work that is barely a means of survival i.e. domestic work, women criminality is a result of poverty.

As it has been explained by Bonger (1967) all the causes of a given crime never have equal influence on women. For a woman to commit a property crime, the primary cause may probably be poverty, but the existing social condition, such as lack of help from others during hunger, her psychological weakness like lack of self respect, may be the other forces to commit a crime. (Ibid)

2.2 The Effects of Sexual Crises

As it has been mentioned by Smith (1989) variations in female criminality in different age groups are, due to physical causes. In addition, the emotional and physical crises caused by periods of menstruation and pregnancy have also a considerable influence on the behavior and criminality of women. The connections between menstruation and shoplifting have also been mentioned.

The influence of menopause on the older age groups is probably greater than that of the earlier sexual stresses on younger women due to the stress they feel.

As it has been mentioned in Smith (1989), many crimes like shop lifting, the receiving of stolen goods, and offences connected with irritability and lack of control, such as insulting behavior and perjury are committed between the ages of forty and fifty. Depression, anxiety, and emotional instability are acknowledged to be characteristics of women at this period of their lives.

At the menopause stage, a woman's concern at her imagination will be loss of sexual attraction and may be combined with fear of losing her husband's attention for it may be diverted towards other women. This results in contributing to particular feelings of restlessness and instability. (Ibid)

2.3 Sex Roles and Crime

The impact of differential socialization cannot be ignored in dealing with crime. As it has been mentioned by Barnes (1969) women/girls are more closely supervised and more strictly disciplined than boys/men. They are protected in a male-dominated world and are traditionally relegated to the role of home maker and bearer of children. They are far from the competition of market place and informal sanctions are imposed more consistently and for more minor deviations from accepted standards.

While men/boys might be encouraged to conform, often they are rewarded for flaunting conventional standards. (Barnes 1969)

As to the writer, women were primarily perceived as sexual objects and expected to remain within male dominated ideologies such as homemaker, caretaker, nurturer, and taking second place after men. Women who strayed from the norm were severely punished and refused of any opportunities to explain their actions. (Ibid.)

As it is mentioned by Barnes (1969), the patterns of male and female crimes are tied to cultural patterns of masculinity and femininity. So, the type and amount of crime committed by each sex expresses both sex typed personality and sex typed social roles. As to Barnes, most crimes committed by women are concealed

by their dishonesty, and women engage in a wide variety of crimes incidental to the roles they are assigned as wife, mother, nurse, and nurturer of children.

Among these are murders, most frequently by poisoning, disloyalty, abortion, infanticide, theft, and forgery-crimes that do not call for daring or physical strength. Moreover, their social roles give them the opportunities for theft. As to the writer, these opportunities, although are very different in many respects, have one thing in common; they give the woman an opportunity to steal and remain undetected or at least unprosecuted to an extent which male thieves can never hope to enjoy. (Ibid)

Generally, female offending could be attributed largely to the gender gap that took into account gender differences in role expectations, socialization patterns, and application of social control, opportunities to commit particular offenses, and access to criminally oriented subcultures.

2.4 Personal Characteristics of Female Offenders

2.4.1 Marital Status

The relationship between marital status and criminality seems to be different for women. According to Pollak, married women seem to contribute a relatively greater share to the criminality of women than those of unmarried women. In other words, married women offenders appear to be more frequent.

As to him, the married woman has financial and social stresses of a different nature which may lead her to be engaged in theft. One of the main anxiety to which a house wife is exposed to society is that of preserving the standards expected by the particular community in which she lives. She herself must

compete with other women, to keep her husband's affection. If she loses, not only will she suffer emotionally, but her economic security may well be threatened. Her family must maintain the standards of their neighbors. (Pollak 1988)

A married woman is also concerned to ensure that her children are well-clothed, and do not feel in any way inferior to their school-mates. The majority of offences committed as a result of these stressful situations include stealing from supermarkets and department stores. The contribution of married women may therefore be high, but the offences committed by them are mainly of a minor nature. It could be concluded that a tendency to commit a crime is influenced by a woman's marital status. (Smith 1989)

2.4.2 Occupation

Variations in female criminality due to different occupations are certain. As cited by Smith, (1989) the criminal liability of women working in the domestic service is relatively high than that of women working in other professions.

According to the writer, domestic service, whether resident or part-time, is by its nature restricted to the home. Any criminal acts committed during working hours are, therefore, less likely to be noticed since crime within the home is easier to be hidden away both from other members of the household and from official agencies. Even if domestic workers are detected by their employer in thefts of small quantities of food, or inaccuracies in their household accounts, such lapses are frequently passed over, or taken for granted. For the domestic workers there are also special temptations. They have easy access to goods, jewelry, and money. (Ibid)

2.4.3 Age

According to Glover, there is a particular difference regarding the ages in which women and girls show tendencies towards crimes. As to him, many women crimes are expected to be committed by the middle age or old age, rather than the young age.

As to him, in most communities, a young girl is more protected than her elder sister. She is confined more within the family home which may be enforced because of strictness of social custom or for fear of pregnancy or due to the nature of her normal household and family duties. So being confined, she has fewer opportunities to commit crimes. (Glover: 1992) But women in the middle and old ages have more freedom and high opportunity to be addicted to alcohol. Since addiction and committing crime have strong relationship, women in the middle and old ages are regarded as having a higher probability to participate in committing crime. (Ibid)

2.4.4 Area of Residence

As has been cited by Smith (1989) there are higher crime rate in urban areas generally, compared to rural areas due mainly to the obvious temptations and opportunities for delinquency offered by city life. Female crimes of petty theft tend to be concentrated in cities, especially those crimes performed outside the woman's place of work or residence.

According to Smith, the proportion of crimes against property tends always to be highest in urban districts, where as the proportion of crimes against persons is

highest in rural areas. But women mainly commit crimes of petty dishonesty against properties.

Women suffering from any sense of inadequacy in their house, family, or social relationship are likely to have the sense of stresses increased through loneliness and lack of the support which would be given by relations or neighbor in a more thickly populated area, which triggers them to commit crime. (Smith: 1989) According to him, all these factors mentioned above; ages, marital status, area of residence and occupation of a woman have certain influence upon the delinquency of women. Each factor, working by itself exerts sufficient pressure upon a woman's personality to divert her from a law-abiding life to one of crime.

2.5 Social Consequences of Imprisoning Women

As it is indicated by Bruce (1999) women are social justice leaders in their daily lives, in individual and collective acts of confrontation, in local communities and internationally. The most important issues that women render to the society whether they are poor women, women of color, immigrant women, Third World women, or women with disabilities, starts from her house. So, to send a woman to prison or to any residential institution even a hospital is to take her away from her family and her children. (Ibid)

As to Bruce, children in particular, may suffer from the separation of their mother, which can lead to the breakup of the home even where there is a stable marriage. When a man is absent from home, it can be sustained by his wife if she is provided with sufficient money and support. But when it is the woman who is absent, the husband is unable to cope; the home may have to be broken up and

the children scattered either into the care of the local authority, or to different relatives.

So the major consideration that has to be taken while imprisoning women is who is going to take care of the children in the mother's absence. It is not a big deal if a man has children, but, if a woman does, it is. (Ibid)

When a mother goes to prison, it is her children who suffer most. Studies link parental imprisonment with problems including poor school performance, aggression, emotional problems, and post-traumatic stress. Young children may be severely traumatized by the sudden separation from their mothers. Children commonly experience sadness, anger, confusion, grief, or depression due to the separation. (Bruce 1999)

As it is mentioned by Renzetti and Goodstein (2001), when women are released from the prison, they face multiple barriers reuniting their families, reintegrating into their communities, and obtaining stable employment and housing. (Ibid)

Generally, maternal imprisonment affects future generations: children's psychological health and sense of family are severely damaged by the separation from their mothers. Increasingly, families are destroyed forever through termination of parental rights, permanently cutting off the mother-child bond even if nobody adopts the children.

Therefore, generally, there are various factors that contribute for the commission of crime, and it has been a problem to threaten the lives of women. As it has been discussed like most areas in the world, for the situations in Ethiopia, women are characterized by economic dependency, socio-cultural pressures,

heavy family responsibilities, gender based unjust division of labor, and denial of basic private and public privileges. Hence these factors give their share of contribution for women to commit crime and remain in custody.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The women's movement and those gender focused studies have generated a number of theories about gender inequality and unjust sex based relationships between the two sexes. (Lewis, 2005) Of course there are different approaches under the feminist theories. Apart from their consensus on women's universal subordinate position and aims to end it as well, each feminist perspective has its own unique understanding on the origin, type, and scope of causes for women's oppression. The strategies that they have proposed to the problem are also different from one feminist theory to the other.

These currently dominant feminist theories are western in their origin. However, these western feminist theories have been criticized for their tendency on generalization of women's experience, cause, and depth of the problem mainly from their perspectives. So that recently post-modern feminists have prospered to contextualize sex, gender, class and race issues in the study of women's subordination. As a whole, these theories are still descended from the general conceptual understanding and principle of feminism (Donovan, 2000)

Feminist theories, like other social and political theories, provide intellectual tools by which we can examine the injustices those human beings in general and women in particular, demand for change (Carol, 2003). Feminist theories also examine and try to explain the cause and conditions in which men are more

powerful; and men's role, status and ideas are seen as having greater value and higher status than that of women (Wendy et al., 2005)

They also try to apply tools to basic knowledge of women's oppression and based on that knowledge, to develop strategies for revisiting subordination and improving women's lives (Carol, 2003). Feminist theories, therefore, generally, propose strategies for activism and action to change the unjust conditions in which women live and work (Wendy et al., 2005)

The analysis of this research thesis rests on feminist theories which were motivated by or concerned about the experience of women especially in terms of their social and economical inequalities. Among the feminists' theories, the liberal feminist has been identified to explain the situation of Ethiopian women in general and that of women prisoners in particular. This is because, liberal feminists have raised pertinent issues and can explain the prevailing situation and position of the majority of Ethiopian women who are denied of their equal rights due to deep rooted patriarchal system. Their focus on eliminating or eradicating gender inequality through promoting women's rights, interests, and issues in society was the other reason behind the preference of liberal feminist theory.

Liberal theories were developed during the so called enlightenment or age of reason was being put into practice. The background of this theory was based on the basic principles that people have certain inalienable or natural rights upon which government may not intrude.

As Yelifign Abegaze has explained, the main view of liberal feminist was, all people are created equal and deserve equal rights. They also believe that oppression exists because of the way in which men and women are socialized, which supports patriarchy that portray women inferior to men and strive to keep the status-quo. They further stated that, women should be given the same opportunities in political, economic, and social spheres to their male counterparts. Besides, women should have the right to chose and make decisions on issues that affect their lives or destiny.

In addition, liberal feminists were very keen about women's equal consideration with out discrimination because of their sex and not seeking special privilege for women. Their objective was to remove the barriers that prevent equal access for women to information, technology, and jobs. This is what this study is also trying to address. As long as women are equally treated at all levels it will be up to them to maneuver within the equal space they will have for their empowerment. Reality shows that, women are often discriminated because of the deep-rooted socio-cultural practices that hinder women to develop and exercise their rights. Many women in the world have made it to the highest level even under circumstances that are not favorable to women. The idea is not at all to create polarization between women and men, rather is to make use of each other's skill, experience, potential, and knowledge for the betterment of both women and men.(Yelifign: 2007)

Moreover liberal feminists have supported and advocated for the development and revision of laws and legislation that remove the barrier for women. These acts of legislation demand equal opportunities and rights for women, including

equal access to jobs and equal pay. In addition they also believe that removing these barriers directly challenges the ideologies of patriarchy, and lead to the liberation of women. During the first wave of women's struggle, liberal feminists were the one who fought for acts of legislation that have greatly increased the status of women, in many fields (Donovan, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Site Selection and Description of the Study Area

The selection of the research place is based on a series of discussions with experts from Prison Fellowship Ethiopia. Kimbibiti and Debre-Birhan prisons were selected among others for the researcher's familiarity with the area and with the people. Furthermore, since the prisons are established long time ago with their low status, the prisoners are exposed to the severe inadequacies that afflict prisons.

Kimbibiti prison is located in North of Shewa Zone of Oromia Region. It is 83 Kilometers away from Addis Ababa. The prison is located at the peak of the mountainous part of the city. Climatically, Kimbibiti is characterized by cold weather and since the prison is on the highland part of the city, it mostly shares the weather, to which the prisoners suffer from. Prisoners who came far away from kimbibiti especially suffer a lot due to the weather change.

The compound is vast and it contains a number of sections especially for men offenders. After crossing the main gate, towards the left is found the women's section. It is separated from the men's section through a simple fence and locked up. The women's section is given one third of the total area of the compound and is organized in a different way compared to the men's section. The men's section is given the largest area due to their greater number and there is no fence in front of the rooms whereas the women's rooms are fenced.

There are no special sections for different types of offenders in the case of both women and men. All types of offenders with different cases are living and

handled similarly. The murderers, thieves, the sick, all types of offenders are jammed together.

The women who have children with them, pregnant women, nursing women, the old, and the young women are living together in narrow rooms. Looking at this fact, anybody might suggest that there should be special considerations for special cases for women offenders.

On the other hand, Debire-Birhan prison which is found at the centre of Debrebirhan city is located 130 kilo meters away from Addis Ababa. Like Kimbibiti, Debre-Birhan prison is a large establishment with different sections for women and men offenders. The situation of the prisoners at Debrebirhan is a little better in some aspects than the situation of prisoners at Kimbibiti. For women offenders the situation seems good compared to the former prison. More than half of the women prisoners appreciated their living situation. In addition to the situation of the living rooms, shortage of water is not a major problem for women inmates at Debrebirhan. Climatically, Debrebirhan is characterized by extreme cold weather and the prisoners suffer from this unfavorable situation even more than Kimbibiti prisoners.

Both Kimbibiti and Debrebirhan prisons have almost the same situation and sections for handling women and men except the size of the rooms' women offenders are kept in.

Except for their location both prisons look similar when we look at the front site.

3.2 Data Source and Methods of Data Acquisition

Pertinent data was collected from both primary and secondary sources by employing different methods.

3.2.1 Primary Data

The following tools were used in collecting primary data: focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and questionnaires in order to validate the findings and for confirmation of the same information by different methods or sources.

With the help of a check list, focus group discussions were held with selected women inmates to gather basic information on the problems, the causes of crime, and the situation of prisons. Key informant interview comprised of interviewing officials from both of the prisons.

A questionnaire was designed and administered for women suspects and convicts who are found at the prisons. Moreover, a number of open-ended questions were asked so as to get the desired information without restricting the respondents to specified categories of responses.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was used to supplement primary data which were collected from articles, basic official documents and bulletins, other related research papers; professional journals and books.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Out of the total size of the two prisons women population (i.e.60), 50 % were taken. Hence, $50/100*60=30$. Both suspects and offenders of crime and unmarried and married women prisoners were included in the survey.

For the sample selection, simple random sampling techniques were used and then copies of questionnaires were distributed to the sample group and they were assisted by the women monitors to answer.

For the focused group discussion, women prisoners were assigned to different groups purposely. A total of five groups each containing three to six members were formed.

3.4 An Overview of prisons in Ethiopia

As it is indicated by Yilma Mengesha, in Ethiopia, before the reign of Tewodros prisoners were arrested in palaces, in the houses of Lords and Local administrators. Each ruler had his own way of dealing with criminals and offenders.

At the base of every penal system there is an objective for imprisonment. The basic aim of placing an offender in prison like today is for the purpose of punishment, deterrence, and reform. The person who has committed a wrong must suffer in return. The state through prisons takes punishments to punish the individual who has violated the criminal law, since crime is by definition a wrong committed against the state.

As it has been mentioned by Yilma Mengesha, the punishments rendered were severe- capital punishment such as hanging, cutting off a hand for theft, flogging, imprisonment, and similar penal measures were common before the reign of Tewodros. In addition transporting of offenders from place to place was common. The prison house where prisoners were kept was a common jail for the political offenders, thieves, and murderers.

According to Yilma, prior to the reign of Tewodros, the place where prisoners were kept was dirty and unhealthy. However, after that, prisons which have the necessary accommodations such as clinic, school, and vocational training, were built.

Moreover, the changing of prisoners from one place to another place which was common before him was abandoned and permanent guards were posted to watch over the prisoners. According to him, the era of modern prisoners began at that time. (Yilma: 1986)

An examination of prison conditions in Ethiopia and prisoners' right today reveals that considerable progress has certainly been achieved in comparison with the cruelty and extreme misery found in the past. The punishments rendered and the penal measures are changed. However much remains to be done to further improve conditions in federal prisons and in many regional states' prisons. More over there appears a sincere desire on the part of the government to modernize and to make less harsh the prison system. (Justice for all PF- Ethiopia: 2006)

That said there is an immediate need to improve existing prison conditions in Ethiopia because many prison facilities are in poor condition since the prison buildings were built many years back and lack minimum facilities.

Physical conditions in many of Ethiopia's prisons reflect decades of negligence. Prisons are old and in disrepair. Economic instability in Ethiopia has also affected the availability of material goods for prison maintenance and repair, prisoner clothing and prisoners' employment opportunities. Mattresses, blankets, and prisoners' uniforms are often ragged and dirty. Toilets and showers are ancient, and many of them do not function properly. Educational and vocational training for both prisoners and staff is completely inadequate.

It is important to learn about the existing problems in prisons and their influences on the prisoners. It is even more important to examine the main causes that impeded the improvement of prison conditions in different parts of Ethiopia. Certainly primary causes include insufficient budget, lack of skilled human resources, lack of outside support, poor facilities and overcrowding for both women and men offenders. (Justice for all PF- Ethiopia: 2006)

As it has been mentioned in Morris, the penal system in the past times didn't differentiate much between male and female offenders in many countries. For example, women were whipped, hanged, transported, and imprisoned.

Gradually some notice was taken of the female offenders. For example, in different countries starting from the seventeenth century women were granted stays of execution if they were pregnant and statutes in the early nineteenth century abolished the whipping of women, first in the public and later in private. Moreover, they were granted special treatments according to their needs and

cases that are directed at regulating women from their anti social behavior.
(Morris: 1994)

Even though, there is no study which shows the first prison where women offenders were kept for the first time, women were kept in the Addis Ababa central prison as political offenders. As Yilma has indicated, the fourth section (quarter) of Addis Ababa Central Prison was meant for women after it had been established. And it was separated by iron sheets from the male section. All female prisoners were kept together in one room; adjacent to their rooms they were provided trainings in knitting, dress making, and handicraft. (Yilma: 1986)

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

The study was conducted at DebreBirhan, and Kimbibit prisons respectively. In these prisons, there are 36 and 24 women detainees (both suspects and convicts).

4.1. Data Presentation and Analysis

This part of the research is where the findings are presented and interpreted. The main data has been obtained through the administration of 53 questionnaires, followed by interviews and group discussion conducted in the study center.

For the purpose of analysis the questionnaire and the interview results were categorized into nine major parts. These are:

- 1 - The social background of the convicted women offenders
- 2 - The possible causes for women offenders
- 3- Women's relationship with others while in prison
- 4- Women's opinion regarding whether they will return to their place after they are released.
- 5- Services rendered in the prison/ special treatments for women inmates
- 6- Women's opinion with regard to the acceptance they get from the prison Community
- 7- Major problems mentioned by women prisoners
- 8 - The prison system from the perspective of women offenders and
- 9 - Suggestions of the prisoners as to what shall be done in order to improve the conditions.

The major sources of information obtained from prisoners were supplemented by further interviews with prison administrators.

4.2 The Social Background of the Convicted Offenders

The women inmates/ convicted offenders were asked to indicate their age, marital status, educational attainment, and employment before conviction, in order to give the reader an insight into their socio-economic status and this is presented on table 1.

Table 1 Percentage Distribution of the Social Background of Convicted Women

| | Age of Respondents | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Age | 18-22 | None | None |
| | 23-27 | 4 | 13 |
| | 28-32 | 9 | 30 |
| | Above 33 | 17 | 57 |
| Total | | 30 | 100 |
| Educational status | Illiterate | 28 | 93 |
| | 1-4 Grade | 2 | 7 |
| | 5-8 Grade | None | None |
| Total | | 30 | 100 |
| Marital status | Married | 19 | 63 |
| | Single | 3 | 10 |
| | Widowed | 8 | 27 |
| Total | | 30 | 100 |

As shown in the table the majority of women are illiterate, married and are above the age of 40.

4.3 Possible Causes for Women Criminality

As it is discussed in the literature review, there is no single cause which contributes to offending of a woman. As the results from the interview show different factors have interwoven together for the women to end up in the prisons.

As the results of the questioners and interview held with the women prisoners show that 75% of them were accused of murder, whereas the remaining 25 % were accused of petty theft and assaults.

Table 2 Reasons for Committing Crimes

| Reasons | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Revenge | 7 | 23 |
| Triggered by Alcohol | None | None |
| Physical, psychological & sexual abuses | 20 | 67 |
| Poverty | 3 | 10 |
| Others | None | None |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

In relation with the causes behind women's criminality, the researcher found that repeated physical, psychological and sexual abuses takes the greatest proportion of causes that led women criminals to commit murder. It has also been found that most of the victims for the women murders were spouses, infants, and women who have sexual relationships with their husbands.

Next to the physical, psychological, and sexual abuses, revenge has become the second major reason for the women inmates to commit the crime. As some of the

women inmates have explained they have committed the murder simply because the victims i.e. the spouses were having affairs with other women.

However from the interview as well the questionnaire, 70% of the women inmates don't admit that they had committed murder. They explained that they are convicted or destined to prison because of the false accusation presented against them by the victim's relatives and families. And 15% of women said that they were accused by the victim as revenge because of the breaking up of their friendship.

In addition to the repeated physical, psychological, and sexual abuses and revenge, poverty has take the greatest percentage for women offenders to be a cause for those women who were accused of petty theft and robbery.

As has been mentioned by Bonger, women and poverty have strong attachments. Because of poverty more women engage in petty theft than men. (Bonger: 1967)

Moreover it has been stated by writer Fraenkel that it is the women of the lower status both economically and socially, who are committing crime. (Fraenkel: 1970)

Due to this fact, these lower class women try lots of things so as to make them selves free from the situation and that is the reason more women than men are engaged in petty thefts and shopliftings. From the finding, for most of the women who were convicted of theft poverty was the major cause for the commission of the crime.

4.4 Relationships of Women Inmates

Women in the prison have to adapt to the new environment, people and administrations in order to live in harmony with other women inmates. As much as possible their relationship has to be smooth so as to make their stay at prison meaningful. With these regard women prisoners in both prisons were asked about their relationship with other women prisoners and the finding has been summarized as follows.

Table 3 Relationship of women Inmates

| Relationship | Frequency | Percentage% |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Good | 8 | 27 |
| Has a friendship and good sprit | 22 | 73 |
| Looked up by others | None | None |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

The women offenders were asked to explain their opinions with regard to the relationship they have in the prison community. For this point, 73% of the women offenders explained that they do have smooth relationship with other women offenders. But, in the prisons visited, even though women offenders do have smooth relationship each other, they do not chat and cherish like that of the men may be because they were busy with their handiwork from which they earn too little income to support themselves or their children if any. Furthermore, many of them didn't have the habit of talking or chatting with one other.

The focus group discussion has served as the best method to understand the extent of good relationship women offenders have. During the focus group discussion women were taking their turns to speak about their situations and the whole situations in the prison. Moreover, they were asking each other questions and answering for the questions that confirm the whole situation about their crimes and lives.

Since the subordination of women originates from the socialization process where women are expected to be submissive and subordinate, they have to suppress their feelings and keep it inside until it burst out in such unfortunate incidents. (Mark 1995)

In addition to this lack of proper training, education, and lack of information on pertinent issues leaves women into a bad situation. In most cases, ending up in prison for most of the years without knowing how to deal even with the prison or court system.

4.5. Women's opinion regarding whether they will return to their home

The women offenders were asked to explain their opinion whether they will be back to their home when they get out of the prison.

Table 4 Percentage Distribution of Women Offenders on their opinion regarding whether they will be back to their place after release or not

| Opinion | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Will return | None | None |
| Will not return | 28 | 93 |
| Not sure | 2 | 7 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

With regard to this question 93% of the women offenders have responded that, they will not return since they aren't welcomed and isolated from the society. They prefer migrating to another place than going back home and their community when they are released. As to the women inmates, when they are released from the prison, they will face problems while attempting to reunite with their families, reintegrate into their communities, and obtaining stable living situation and housing.

For the researcher it was easy to understand about these women's lives after their release. They were very disturbed and sorrowful while expressing their hopes to return to their places. They did not seem to have any hope to return to their families and villages so as to lead life like that of the past.

Even though the above mentioned factors will challenge the women; they have strong decision to keep on migrating to other places than returning to their homes.

4.6 Social Services Rendered In the Prison

Another particular issue the researcher wanted to focus was as to whether there is any special treatment given to women offenders while they are in the prison and if there is any, as to the type of treatment given.

As it is explained by different writers like Gibbons, treatment consists of some activities designed to handle offenders in prisons. As to the writer in most modern prisons in the world, inmates are well treated and given considerations while they stay in the prisons: they are well fed, their medical needs are served, they are given different skill trainings, they are allowed visitors, and they can receive an unlimited number of letters and so on. (Gibbons: 1992)

However, according to the information gathered from women inmates during the focus group discussion, they were not getting access to education, religious institutions, shops, and skill training opportunities during their stay at the prisons. Moreover, it was possible to know about women prisoners' right in relation with religion.

According to the women inmates, the situation of giving absolute freedom of religion to followers of all beliefs is very poor. The most common and popular of the beliefs considered as religion and protected in the prison are Orthodox and Muslim. Other religions like Catholic and Protestant Christianity are not accepted as religion by prison officials. The writer was informed by some of the women inmates about the discrimination made among religions. In addition to this, the women offenders are not allowed to worship since the institutions are located very adjacent to the men's section. Besides it is not allowed for them to exercise their beliefs in groups.

It is clear that if an individual breaks the law they should be punished, but a prisoner should not face additional punishment whilst they are in prison. However, women are doubly punished when they are sent to the prison. Even they don't get the opportunities that are available for men prisoners. What has been observed in the prisons does not totally show that the women prisoners are given considerations and treatments that are directed to modify their behavior from antisocial acts.

Table 5 Percentage Distribution of Special Treatments Rendered

| Treatments Rendered | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Education & Rehabilitation services | None | None |
| Different Skill Trainings | None | None |
| Counseling and guidance | 7 | 23 |
| Special food provision | 11 | 37 |
| Special medical services | 6 | 20 |
| Comfortable rooms | 6 | 20 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

During both interviews as well focus group discussions the women offenders have clearly explained about the poor services rendered in the prison. As to women in Kimbibiti and Debre-Birhan, they are not regard as members of the prison community. But as has been attempted in the literature review, there need to be special treatment for women criminals since they have special physical, social, and psychological needs. However, it was found that there is nothing that has been done to accelerate special treatment for women offenders in the prisons visited; instead it was found that they are harshly treated by the

system designed for men. The only thing that is being done by the officers is to let the prisoners watch different TV programs, like police program, women's program. It is believed by the prison administrators that, these might help them change their attitude about crime and the society at large. But it would have been good to deliver different rehabilitation programs like educational and skill trainings, since the nature of the crimes committed differ greatly from one woman to the other. According to the administrators, the prison is not equipped with a social worker who might help in the treatment of women offenders

4.7 Women's opinion on how they are considered in the prison

During the interview and the questionnaire, women inmates were asked whether women and men have equal acceptance in the prison community and if not how they are considered. It is a fact that in the society women are given and put secondary position to men in every aspect. In relation with this women prisoners were asked to explain about this and if they aren't equally considered with men, how it is manifested in the prison community. The responses have been summarized in the following table as follows.

Table 6 Percentage distribution of women inmates on how they are considered in the prison

| Opinion | Frequency | percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Equally considered and treated with men | 6 | 20 |
| Not equally considered and treated with men | 23 | 77 |
| Don't know | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

With regard to this, 77% of the women inmates have responded that they aren't equally considered and treated with men in the prison community and this inferior respect given to them is manifested through different services rendered to men and women in the prisons. For instance, education is the most expressive factor for the least consideration given to them. For no reason women and men are delivered the opportunity differently.

The other prominent factor for the least consideration is the skill trainings given in the prison community. Men are given different skill trainings and they are heavily involved, while women are not given any skill training that can help for subsidizing themselves and their families while they are in the prison or when they are released from the prison.

According to the finding, there is a big discrimination between women and men in relation with the delivery of education. In Kimbibiti and Debre-Birhan prisons women are not attending the schooling which is available to male. As to the women offenders since the classes are located very near to men, women aren't allowed to attend the lessons.

The researcher inquired from the officials whether distance matters for attending the classes and practicing religious activities for women inmates. As it has been found from the officials, since women monitors are very few in the prison, it will be very difficult for them to watch the women inmates while they go back and forth to and from school and religious activities. Allowing women inmates for school and religious activities means creating additional burden for the women monitors since they are busy looking after the women inmates during meal and urine time.

But, it is obvious that education plays a very vital role for the development and prosperity of a society. Various authors have affirmed this truth. So being a key factor for development, education is vital in all institutions including prisons. Its importance is particularly high in the prisons of developing countries where prisoners in most cases are illiterate. (Robert 1972)

As it has been affirmed by different writers, the objective of prison education in its broader sense should be the socialization of the inmates through varied impersonal and expressional activities with emphasis on individual inmate needs. The objective of this program should rehabilitate the inmates to the society with a wholesome attitude toward living, with a desire to conduct themselves as good citizens and with the skill and knowledge which will give them a reasonable chance to maintain themselves and their dependants through honest labor.

To this end, each prisoner shall be given a program of education which seems most likely to further socialization and rehabilitation. Since prison education has a dual advantage of training inmates in vocational activities and producing well skilled and qualified citizens to the country's socio-economic development, it has to be delivered in the prison community without any

segregation between men and women. Unfortunately however, no such practice is seen in Kimbibite as well in Debre-Birhan prisons.

Thus it could be said that, in Kimbibit and Debrebirhan prisons even though there are school in the prisons, women are not allowed for education as their male counterparts. Since education is one of the best means of rehabilitation, it would have been provided for all the prisoners by providing them all the necessary materials. But its realization is very much restricted for women

inmates. The very tragic reality about women's education is that since the school is located very near to men's quarter women aren't allowed to go and attend the class.

Equal access to education is one area in which women have been denied for centuries in different areas and situations and this discriminatory practice in our society start from the early childhood of a girl where a society enforces anxiety in females. Through the socialization process girls are thought to be submissive and passive and this influence is manifested in the women's life through different time and situation.

Feminists especially liberalists believe that women and men should be given the same opportunities in educational, political, economic, and social spheres. For liberalists, women's subordination is traced from the lower level of education they have had. It is due to this fact the majority of women remained providing reproductive service in the domestic sphere.

To them, a means to eradicate women's lower situation is educating and empowering women. Theoretically, education is considered specifically important for a woman because it means: better health of the family, better nutritional status, low fertility, and infant mortality, better chance to daughter's education etc. Due to this fact many governments and international organizations have recognized the need to educate women for societal development. (Roger Hood & Richard Sparks, 1978)

But what has been observed by the researcher at Kimbibi and Debrebirhan prisons is only the name of rehabilitation for women prisoners. The practice has fall apart. As the causes of crime for women were explained differently,

treatments of the criminals need to have different aspects. Even though the prison has set different programs such as education and different skill trainings as rehabilitations for the women inmates, they have remained being dead phrases of the regulations of the prison.

One can possibly say that the existing reality of women prisoners at Kimbibi and Debrebirhan prisons by no means speak that they are in the process of rehabilitation from their anti-social acts. They are living confined in a very restricted rooms and areas in the prison community. No adequate food, clothing, bed, and mattress is given especially at Kimbibiti. In a 4 by 6 meters house there are about 16 women prisoners, living in a very crowded manner. There are no adequate medical treatments and no opportunity for women prisoners to be educated.

As it has been found from the interview with officials at Kimbibiti, formerly women's section (quarter) at the prison was located in another place. As to the officials, the former section was better in many aspects for women inmates. They were living in cells where beds and enough space for them as well for their kids were available. Since it was very near to the men's section, it was very simple for some of the women inmates to establish relationships with their male counterparts.

During such situation, it was necessary for the officials to move the place where now women inmates are jammed together. As to the officials, the former women's section has made the protection activity very difficult. So as to simplify the security process, women become the recipient of all the awful happenings.

As it has been found from the interview, men inmates have greater population compared to the women. Due to their small numbers in prisons, women often have less access to services, such as suitable education and skill training than men.

According to Mark (1995) women, especially mothers, in prison have special physical, vocational, social, and psychological needs. Yet even they often face problems with maintaining contact with family and the outside world, as well as accessing education, training and work programmes, and healthcare whilst in prison. (Ibid)

As has been mentioned by Glover (1992) the greatest pain for women while at prison is separation from children, and the ongoing concerns about housing and resettlement that stem from that. For men, losing their home doesn't necessarily mean losing their kids. (Ibid)

Prisons create unfavorable conditions for women than men. As it has been indicated in Heidensohn's finding (1985) some of the women have explained that their pride disappears while they were in prison, especially when they were in their menstruation period. They just feel like they have got no self-respect. Because the environment they were living was not convenient for the feelings they had during their menstruation period (Ibid).

In most cases, their security administrations are harsher than men's because there are not enough women to make up separate blocks. In the prison visited, the women's movement is highly limited with their small quarter where as men can easily move around the prison compound.

4.8 Major Problems Mentioned by Women Inmates

During the interview as well the questionnaire, women inmates in both prisons were asked to mention the most prevalent problems they are facing starting from the date of incarceration till now while they are living in the prison. To this effect, almost all the women inmates have responded the same answer and the responses have been summarized as follows.

Table 7 Percentage Distribution of Problems Mentioned

| Problems | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Quality of food | 5 | 17 |
| Shortage of Water / clean water | 12 | 40 |
| Narrowness of the living rooms | 10 | 33 |
| Others | 3 | 10 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

According to the findings women inmates especially in Kimbibiti prison are suffering from the narrowness and untidiness of the room, shortage of water for hygienic purposes, and the poor quality of food. As to them, they have to travel a long distances to fetch water for themselves accompanied by the police, since water supplies are not available for them. This has become a very serious problem for women especially during their menstruation periods. In connection with this, the women inmates have explained their problem in relation with the narrowness of their cells when they want to dry the cloths they use for their menstruation periods. Moreover, they are exposed to flea and louse because of the untidiness of the rooms and lack of sufficient air in the rooms. Due to lack of the cleanliness in their cloths, bed sheets, and blankets they are exposed to

different diseases. In connection with this, women are doubly punished in the prisons since the medical services delivered in the prison community are very poor. They neither get the chance to live in clean and spotless house nor are they delivered good medical services.

In comparison with Kimbibiti prison, Debrebirhan prison seems a little better for women inmates in some aspects. Especially shortage of water is not a big problem for women inmates at Debrebirhan. But both prisons share the same feature in putting women prisoners at problem.

As has been mentioned by Lioyd (1977) the right of the individual to health care is generally accepted. While incarceration should not diminish this right, access of imprisoned individuals to qualified medical care should not be reduced. But in the prisons visited women prisoners do not have "freedom of choice" with respect to their medical care. Not only this but also these women are in great problems to get the access for medical care.

Health care for women in prisons requires access to primary and back-up services, and also includes provision of services for the special needs of this population. These needs are largely related to reproduction, childcare, pregnancy, childbirth or abortion, family planning and gynecological disorders. Incarcerated females in most cases are mothers, a situation that create stress and has health implications for the prisoner and her family. (Lioyd, 1977)

Women's health care needs such as ante-natal care are often ignored and female prisoners have a higher rate of mental illness and are more likely to have been victims of physical and sexual abuse than the general population. As to the writer, women prisoners are a population isolated from the mainstream of the

environment's health care system, and they are a population with special health problems living in a distorted environment. (Ibid)

In most cases, these health care needs are highly related with sanitations and medical services. But in the prisons visited, women offenders are highly exposed for the problems.

As the information gathered during the interview with the prisons administrations reveals the lack of sanitary and hygienic services and poorly built latrines, damaged and infected water supply structures, shortage of clean water in the prison community, and lack of shower and cloth washing passage have caused different diseases on women inmates. These problems were highly stressed by the women inmates as well by the officials as needing high attention from the concerned bodies.

During the interview with prison officials, the researcher was interested to know whether these problems are common to men. It has been found that except shortage of water prevalent in the prison community, the other problems aren't shared by men prisoners. They don't suffer from the narrowness of the living rooms and spend their time on learning and attending different skill trainings delivered in the prison.

Such discriminatory practices are deep rooted and prevalent mainly because the justice system is highly male dominated. This phenomenon is clearly reflected in prison community and depicted in a number of indicators that show the gaps between the benefits women and men get and the differential treatments extended to men and women while in prison.

Inequitable treatment of women in prison, denying them access to many of the services that their male counterparts have available to them while incarcerated, including different skill or vocational training and in-prison jobs reveals the women's secondary position in the society.

According to the information gathered during the focus group discussion many women have come from far places. Due to this fact, they can't see their families regularly because of the farness of the place and due to the ups and downs of their families' lives.

Women, especially those imprisoned far away from home, face a number of family concerns. As women are generally the primary caregivers within a family unit, their absence causes severe disruption to children's or families life. As well as the trauma suffered by both mother and children during imprisonment may take time for mothers to regain care of their children after their release from prison, particularly when they are unable to obtain secure housing. Unlike most male prisoners women do not have someone on the outside holding onto the family home and possessions and caring for their children.

Unlike men for women, the main concern upon being arrested remains, how are my children going to end up? Since the majority of women in prison are mothers. The loss of self-esteem and identity of women in prisons is associated closely with loss of contact with children and family. It would seem that the loss of contact with family results in a serious problem of depression for women in prison.

During the interview women prisoners had expressed that they had suffered excessively from being held far from their families and being separated from

their children, receiving fewer visitors than men. Women are often lone-carers and they are concerned about what happens to their children and elderly relatives in need of care. Family's especially the children's pain is first and foremost felt by a mother than other family members. From the group discussion women offenders were explaining this fact many times. They have really missed everything going in their home and their surrounding. They were really worried about their children since most of them have children at home and since most of them are the primary care givers for their family.

During the focus group discussion and interview, women inmates were explaining their unhappiness about their children. They even prefer death than living with being deprived from their children and the ongoing process around their homes.

Another point which has been identified during the interview and focus group discussion was the problems that pregnant women face while they are in prison. As it has been found from the study there are no special places and special considerations given to the women who spend their pregnancy time in the prisons. They are living with other prisoners without any system of classification. Moreover, there were six women prisoners who were nursing and their children were assigned sentences just like adult offenders and imprisoned in common cells without any structure of categorization.

In the prisons visited, provisions for the needs of pregnant women are poor both in food and medical provisions. It has been observed that there were seriously inadequate medical facilities in the prisons. And this problem had lead to sickness and miscarriage for the women inmates.

Similarly, women can't buy sanitary towels and tampons which prisons aren't providing for them. From the interview with the officials it has been known that formerly the prisons were providing these materials, but, now they aren't. Not every woman has access to a doctor, and many women were suffering from problems with menstruation due to a change in climate, malnutrition, ill health, and stress.

Moreover, women who were pregnant or nursing were given the same type: quality as well quantity of food in the prisons. As it has been known from the interview as well as from the focus group discussion with the women inmates in both prisons, women eat the food not because it is nice and tasty, but because they have to survive.

The researcher has been informed by some women inmates from Kimbibiti prisons that there are problems they are face during meal time. Not all women are going to the kitchen to bring their food during the meal time; instead two women go to the kitchen and carry both Injera and Watt for all of the women inmates. Respectively each woman gets a turn to do so. This is a major problem because the containers are not enough especially for the watt, sometimes they are burnt while caring it. In addition to the problems mentioned above, women prisoners also face problems with the security guards during the night. As four women prisoners indicated these security guards came into their cells during the night and try to have sexual relationship with them. Since the women are locked up from the outside it is easy for these security guards to open the doors and come into the cells. Women prisoners who are subjected to such situations use shouting as weapon. Even the researcher has been informed by some of the

women inmates that when sometimes the men prisoners are forgotten to be locked up from the outside, they come to the women's section during the night. As to them the protection given to them is very poor and gives the chance for the women to be exposed for different attacks. Generally saying, the majority of convicted women offenders believe that it has a punitive effect than being educative, and it has a tendency of leading the prisoners, to hatred and revenge towards the society.

4.9. The prison from the perspective of women Inmates

Various questions were forwarded for women offenders in order to analyze to what extent is the prison educative or has an impact on the behavioral changes of the women offenders. Some of the questions included during the interview were;

- What was the sentence passed against you?
- For how long have you served your prison term?
- Is there any special treatment rendered to women offenders?
- How do you explain the prison and the situation of prison?
- And what is your relationship with other women inmates?

To this effect, more than half of the women offenders have responded that they have served the prison term for a long time especially women who are convicted of murder, whereas some of them explained that they have entered the prison few years back and have been convicted few months ago.

Table 8 Percentage Distribution of women offenders on their opinions regarding the prisons

| Opinions | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| The prison is educative and offenders have learned positive aspects | 6 | 20 |
| The prison has a negative aspect on their behavior | 24 | 80 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

Almost the majority of the women offenders suggested that imprisonment by itself doesn't change a thing. Imprisoning only won't have any bearing on the behavioral change of the offender. As to them, it will be better if the length of the sentence is shorter and effective counseling or special treatment program is given to them. But the mere hardening of the sentence demoralizes them leading to revenge and hatred towards the society in general.

5. The suggestions of women inmates to improve the prison conditions.

The women inmates were asked to explain their opinion as what shall be done in order to improve the situations of the prisons.

To this effect some of the women inmates explained their opinions on the food provided. This category of the women has stressed their opinion towards the quality and quantity of food provided in the prison. As to them, the major problem during their stay in the prison is the quality and quantity of food. They are eating for survival, not because the food is tasty.

In addition to the quality of the food, this category of the women inmates have claim on the quantity of the food. Especially those women who have children with them, the quantity of the food is not enough for them. So for them, the first thing that has to be improved in the prison community is the quality and quantity of food.

On the other hand, the other categories of the women inmates were highlighting their opinions towards the situations of the rooms. For them the situations of the living rooms were very difficult to adapt in the prison system. They are facing problems while they are living jammed in small rooms. These women were worried for the privacy as well the hygiene of the rooms and gave priority to their living situation. For these women, life is meaningless unless the rooms are clean, comfortable and give some sort of privacy. As to them, when they want to be alone they don't have the opportunity, when they want to have nap or sleep they don't have the opportunity. To these women death is preferred than living this life.

Other categories of women inmates who face so many problems in relation to the shortage of water were explaining their opinions to improve the provision of water in the prison community. For these women there is nothing that has to be given priority before water. They don't even seem worried about the quality of the food and the situations of the living rooms. But for them there needs to be sufficient amount of water in the prison for hygienic and drinking purposes.

Still other categories of women inmates were pointing their ideas towards to sentence periods as it has to be shorter but effective and educative. For them, the longer the sentences and the more difficult the situations in prison means the

higher the probability of leading them to want to avenge themselves. As to these categories of inmates, women have to be imprisoned for a short period and they need to be given effective counseling and treatments with effective education and skill training.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In general from the study, most of the women inmates are convicted of murder due to the repeated physical, psychological, and sexual abuses inflicted upon them. From the research it could be said that women inmates have good spirit and relationship while they are living in the prison.

From the study it was known that women offenders are not likely to go back to their place after release since they will not be welcomed and isolated from the society. So, most of them explained that they will be migrating to other places. As to them they will have a difficulty in reuniting with their families, reintegrating into their communities, and obtaining a stable living situation and housing after they are released.

From the study it can be concluded that, there is no special treatment of women prisoners starting from time of incarceration. What is provided under the law is punishment not treatment. No social services that are useful for rehabilitating criminals like education and different skill trainings.

In the prisons visited, women prisoners are not given enough considerations and treatments that are directed to rehabilitate from their anti social acts. They are highly marginalized and least accepted compared to male in many ways.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that women that need special consideration due to their biological needs and due to unique needs are not delivered special

services. All women; pregnant, nursing, the old, the young, the kids and the sick are jammed together in narrow rooms receiving the same service.

From the study, it has been found that narrowness of the prison cells, shortage of water, lack of education and different skill trainings, and lack of guidance and counseling services are respectively critical problems while women are detained in prison.

From the research, it has been observed that the prisons have been built without any consideration of women prisoners: therefore, lack any sort of convenient facilities for women.

The conditions in the prisons visited are very poor for women, with very limited access to the proper sanitation and accommodation. The cells are extremely dark and small, especially during rainy seasons, conditions are cold and damp.

From the finding, it has been known that the majority of the convicted women offenders believed that the longer the imprisoning time without any rehabilitation services has a punitive effect than being educative, and it has a tendency of leading the prisoners, to hatred and revenge towards the society.

In the prisons visited, the need for guidance and counseling was strongly emphasized both by the prison officials and the women prisoners. It is believed that guidance and counseling for women detainees will help them to revive from their anti social acts.

In conclusion, women in prison need frequent visitations from family and friends to maintain positive mental health.

Therefore, all the above mentioned factors call for the reform that should be undertaken with a view to ensure the rights of women inmates. Since female prisoners represent a different constituency than male prisoners, they need special attention for several reasons. First the pattern of women's offences is very different from men's. Second, women prisoners are much more likely to be solely responsible for the care of children and the maintenance of the home than male prisoners. Because of this, the impact of prison is harsh and disproportionate for many female prisoners, often resulting in the loss of their home and serious disruption to the lives of their children. Third, the huge difference in size between the male and the female prison populations means the specific needs of female prisoners have been overlooked. The smaller number of women's prisons creates logistical problems, so women are likely to be held further from home than men. And finally, female prisoners suffer a more severe range of social exclusion problems than men, particularly high levels of abuse, domestic violence and mental health problems. Prison is known to have more serious psychological implications for women.

5.2 Recommendations

On the bases of the conclusions made the following recommendations are forwarded by the researcher. In prison, a special counseling and treatment method should be made available, instead of simply increasing the terms of imprisonment. There need to be prison education/training for women that are designed to guide and assist women inmates towards the acquisition of some skill that may help them as means of livelihood after release.

The government should give the priority of education in prison. It has to be clear that the purpose of sending women to prison has to be for rehabilitation which mainly includes prison education.

It should not be forgotten that a prison with out sufficient rehabilitation program will be school of crime. The shorter imprisoning period with effective rehabilitation services will be educative and effective to change the offenders from their anti-social acts than imprisoning for a long time. Thus, the criminal justice system in its effort towards reduction of the women crime, should try to consider this factor.

The women prisoners should get reasonable and meaningful access to the service that are essential to human beings and should get meaningful access to the protection of their rights. Especially they should get rational and significant access that is available to men prisoners like that of men. In connection with this the women's biological and physical needs need to be reconsidered while imprisoning women. It is fact that the pregnant women offender and men offenders should not be kept in the same situation with the same services.

There need to be prisons that can meet the housing and sanitation needs of the women by building dormitories with high ceilings and excellent ventilation. Bunk-type beds need to be spaced so as to allow for certain privacies, and high quality latrine facilities need to be located in side the dormitories, so that women will have access to them during day and night time.

Women have to be properly thought about their rights in the society or prisons. Empowering them with sustainable source of self income to make them self

reliant in their life, which is also believed to contribute for the wellbeing of the society as a whole.

The need for improving the social and economic status of the women in the society and prisons is crucial. This mainly refers the need for giving due attention to improve the social and economic status of women in the prisons. This involves providing relevant and practical gender based orientations and trainings for male members of the prison about the ultimate importance of gender equality for the society at large. This is because since men are realized as cause of most problems, they are also believed to be part of the solution.

Taking the most hurt people out of the society and punishing them in order to teach them how to live with in society is pointless. What ever else a prisoner knows, she knows every thing there is to know about punishment, because that is exactly what she has grown up with. Whether it is childhood sexual abuse, indifference, or neglect, punishment is most familiar to her. So, there need to be kindness while imprisoning women.

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Appendices

Questionnaire to be filled by women prisoners

The main objective of this research is to assess the living condition of women prisoners (both suspects and convicts).

Therefore you as a respondent are requested to fill the questionnaire and contribute for the research undertaken. Be confidential while filing this questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

- A. You are not requested to write your name in this questioner.
B. Circle one of the letters when you are asked optional questions.
C. Write short and clear answers when you are asked to fill open ended questions.

1. Age _____
2. Educational status
 - a) Illiterate
 - b) 1_6
 - c) 7_12
 - d) technical
 - e) Graduated
 - f) another _____
3. Occupation _____
4. Marital Status
 - a) Married
 - b) Single
 - c) Widowed
5. Do you have children/ a child?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
6. When did you entered first in to the prison? _____

7. What is the offence type you are charged with?

8. Do you agree with the charge?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
9. If yes, why did you commit the offence?
 - a. Economic problem
 - b. Revenge
 - c. Triggered by drink
 - d. I was emotional/I did it as soon as I feel it.
 - e. Another reason _____

10. Are you convicted?
 - a. Yes
 - b) No
11. Have you ever get imprisoned in other prisons before?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
12. If yes, for how many times did you enter in the prison?
 - a) Once
 - b) Twice
 - c) More than two times

13. Have you seen any differences among the prisons?
a) Yes b) No
14. If yes, what is/are the difference/differences? _____

15. Have you faced any problem in the prison in relation with the living condition because you are woman?
a) Yes b) No
16. If yes, what do you think is the cause for the problem?

17. Have you ever faced any problem from the following during your stay at prison?
a) The police/security guards b) The investigating police officer
c) Food providers d) Medical providers
e) Others _____
18. If yes, what is the problem?

19. When do you think will happen the problem?
a) During investigation
b) During food provision
c) During medical provision
d) During night time at our quarter in the prison
e) In another situation _____
20. In the prison who are assigned to look over you?
a) Male polices/guards b) Female polices/guards c) both
21. How do you see the quality of food provision in the prison?
a) Good b) Very good c) Worse d) Bad
22. Why? _____

23. How many times per day are you allowed getting food?
a) Once b) Twice c) Three times d) More than three
24. How do you explain your living room and situation?
a) Comfortable to live
b) Uncomfortable
25. Why? _____

26. In what frequency do you meet visitors (relatives, family or children)?

27. Why? _____

28. What do you feel about being a criminal and imprisoned?

- a) I feel shame
- b) I feel it is normal
- c) I feel guilty and regret
- d) I feel confidence
- e) Other _____

29. Why? _____

30. Do you think women prisoners need special treatment during their detention?

- a) Yes
- b) No

31. If you say yes, in what way they have to be treated?

32. Do you think that women get equal recognition visa-vis men with in the prison community?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

33. Are women in the prison willing to participate in any kind of discussion, if any?

- a) Yes
- b) No

34. If yes, about what you discuss most of the time?

- a) About our families
- b) About our children
- c) About our country/politics
- d) About our crime and stay at the prison
- e) Others _____

35. Is there a clinic available in the prison?

- a) yes
- b) No

36. Have you ever been sick while you are in prison?

- a) Yes
- b) No

37. If yes how do you find the medication?

- a) Good
- b) Very good
- c) Worst
- d) Bad

38. Why? _____

39. How many women live in your room? _____

40. How do you spend your time in the prison?

- a) Participating in the skill training provided

- b) Discussing with other women inmates
- c) Sleeping
- d) Working another income generating activities
- e) others _____

41. Did you get rehabilitation service in the days you were in prisons?
a) Yes b) No

42. If yes, can you mention the rehabilitation services available for women prisoners?

43. Do you have child/children with you (in prison)?
a) Yes b) No

44. If yes, do the child/children get special treatment?
a) Yes b) No

45. If yes, what is the special treatment rendered?

- a) She/he is housed separately
- b) She /he has different and better food and medical service
- c) She/he is given a chance to foster parents
- d) She/he has a budget till certain age
- e) Other _____

46. Is there any special place and treatment for women who are pregnant or nursing?
a) Yes b) No

47. If yes explain? _____

48. If a woman spends her pregnancy period in the prison, how is the medical Service available to her?
a) Very good b) Good c) Worst d) Bad

49. Why? _____

50. If a woman spends her pregnancy period in the prison, how is the food provided to her?

- a) Very good b) Good c) Worst d) Bad

51. Why? _____

52. What benefits did you get starting from the date of detention?

- a) I got social and rehabilitation services
- b) I lived in a better way than those women who are living out of prison
- c) I got educational and different skill training
- d) I haven't got any benefits
- e) Another benefit _____

53. Can you mention the most decisive problems with regard to services rendered in prison in relation with gender difference?

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work. It has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

YESHIMEBET ADMASS



11/4/2008

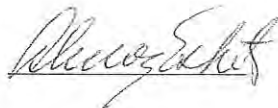
Name of student

Signature

Date

I confirm that this thesis has been submitted with my approval as supervisor of the same:

ALMAZ ESHETE



11/4/2008

Name of Supervisor

Signature

Date