

Analysis of the Capacity of Prison Security Structures on Inmate Escape Prevention in Nakuru Main Prison, Kenya. A Perspective of Junior Prison Officer's

Joash Kiprotich Rono

Dept. of Peace Security and Social Sciences,
Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya;

Samson Wokabi Mwangi

Dept. of Peace Security and Social Sciences,
Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya;

John Omboto

Dept. of Peace Security and Social Sciences,
Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya;

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the capacity of prisons security structures in Nakuru main prison to prevent inmate's escapes in the perspective of junior officers working in the institution who formed 80 % of the sample respondents in the study. This research adopted descriptive research design which involved the use of observation, case study approach and survey technique. Data was collected majorly using questionnaires as data collection instruments and was self-administered to 142 junior prison officers who were directly involved in the facilitation of safe custody to prisoners in Nakuru main prisons. The observation checklist was also used to ascertain the state of the physical security infrastructure used to prevent escapes in Nakuru main prison. Data obtained was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and presented using frequencies, pie charts and tables. The findings from the majority of the respondents showed a lack of permanent perimeter fence at 47.4 %, old dilapidated buildings at 28.9%, lack of the use of technology e.g CCTV at 19.7%, inadequate lighting system at 14.5%. The study recommends construction of a modern security wall in the institution as a strategy to effectively prevent escapes, use of new technology e.g CCTV erection of a proper and adequate watchtowers/Sentries and provision of adequate lighting system at Nakuru main prisons. In addition, there is a need to escalate a similar study to all prison institutions in order to enrich the findings and recommendations for Policymakers in the criminal justice system.

Keywords: Inmates escapes; Security structures; Prison institution; Escape Prevention.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (2013) stipulates that the fundamental goal of every correctional facility globally is to ensure the security of the prison facilities, personnel, prisoners and the members of public. To achieve this goal, prisons historically focused on the physical safe custody of prisoners free from escapes. The physical structure of a prison is extremely important reasons being to keep the society out and the prisoners in (Peterson, 2015), and facilitate an atmosphere free from escapes and hence public safety is ensured. A prison facility essentially should be enclosed with at least two, walls or fences, depending upon the level of risk the prisoners held pose to prison security and the public (United Nations office for Projects Services, 2015). It is however noted from this study that Nakuru main prison physical structures does not echo the standards set by the united nations which explains the causative factors of escapes witnessed it the institution. Kenya inherited the penal system from the British Colonial Government on its independence in the year 1963 and this implies that most of its structures are very old and dilapidated hence prone to escapes as alluded to in this study. Prisons are institutions in Kenya established for the purpose of taking custody and care of people who have been convicted of offences by courts of law. Chapter 90 and 92 laws of Kenya mandates Kenya prisons to provide safe custody to prisoners and community protection among other roles.

Prisoners escape occur due to poor design of prisons' physical security infrastructure and aiding from within and outside the prison facility by among others prison personnel upon compromise or with vested interests, accomplices of the inmate who have not been arrested, family members, security lapse and political influence. Other factors include; prisoners with family issues; with concerns in organizational decisions, with difficulties with fellow inmates and or even with issues with prison staff. Low staff to inmate ratios, inmates with the intent to commit crimes in the community also contribute to escape phenomenon (Culp, 2005). Overcrowding which overstretches the capacity of the prison facilities to conduct classification of prisons hence inmates are kept in facilities that do not meet their security level (Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services Western Australia, 2015).

Prison institutions are classified according to security levels such as Minimum, Medium, maximum based on the level of security and staff supervision the institution is able to provide (UN, 2015). (UNODC, 2016), (Chapter 90 LoK). Prison work is strenuous and involves dealing with people who have been deprived of their liberty, many of whom come from poor backgrounds. Prisoners are people who are believed to pose security threats to the members of the community. Some of them are dangerous, aggressive and others will try to escape. It is clear that none of these individuals would want to be in prison and therefore the main role of the prison management is to hold these people in a secure, safe and humane environment. Prison personnel are the people charged with this responsibility and are the key players in any prison system. It is therefore critical for the prison administrators to recognize their significance and dedicate a substantial amount of time and resources to their enlistment, selection and training to guarantee that prisons have good quality and well-trained staff as a priority (Coyle, 2005).

Congestion is a major challenge globally thus prisons do not meet minimum requirements as stipulated in the (United Nations Standard Minimum Rules, 1955). Congestion acts as a catalyst that trigger tensions as prisoners try to access inadequate resources available. It leads to criminal contamination, belittled human dignity, inadequate and ineffective rehabilitation programs. This

leads to high reoffending rates, human rights violation, overstretched resources and prisoners may contemplate escape in their quest to relieve themselves from the dilemma that comes with congestion. These pose greater security dilemma to prisoners, prison officers and society at large (UN, 2013). Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the official number of prisoners in custody in the year 2015 was 55,000 held in 118 prison facilities in Kenya which have capacity for holding only 26,687 prisoners (KNBS, 2015). Kenya National Commission on Human Rights Commission (KNHRC) describes the Kenyan prisons as 'death chambers', due to overcrowding and poor hygiene (KNHRC, 2002). Similar sentiments are shared by Nyaura & Ngugi (2014) that the prison conditions in Kenya have been dire and punitive since independence.

Nakuru main prison was established in 1969 by a Legal Notice No. 89 of 1969 (Cap. 90 laws of Kenya, 1977 revised). It was established among other 70 semi closed (medium) prisons in Kenya with a capacity of 800 prisoners however findings of this study show that currently, it holds a capacity of about 13000 prisoners. According to the Directorate of Research and Statistics at the Prisons Headquarters escape report for the year 2016, there were 69 escapes reported to have occurred in prison facilities in Kenya out of which 10 escapes occurred in Nakuru main prisons alone making it the leading prison institution that most escapes occurred as illustrated in figure 1.0 below

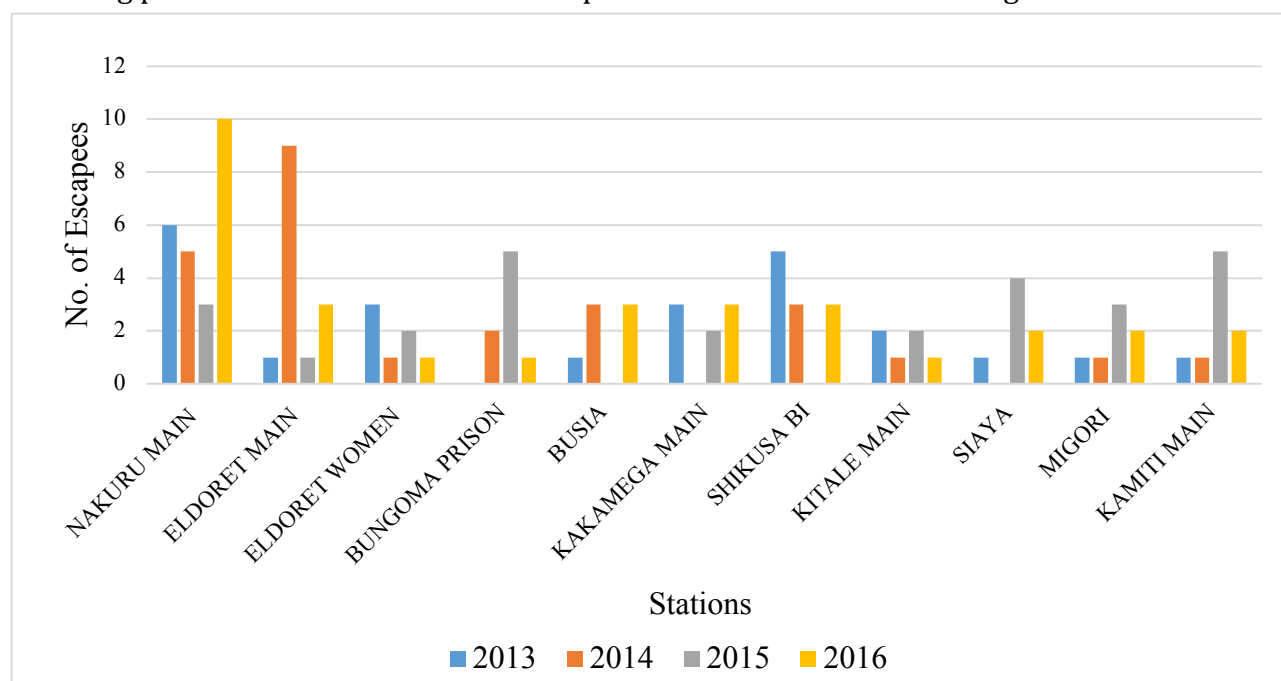


Figure 1. Number of Escaped prisoners for the period 2013 - 2016 (Source: KPS, 2016)

Whereas it is crucial to note that even when the Kenya government is putting efforts to curb escapes by recruitment of more staff, improving the infrastructure and building more prisons, escapes still do occur. This phenomenon can be attributed to: old and dilapidated prison structures, overcrowding which has jeopardized the institution's capacity to contain prisoners as per security classification and overstretched budgets, inadequate lighting and lack of the use of technology e.g CCTV. The objective of this study, therefore, was to analyse the capacity of prison security infrastructure in prevention of escapes and suggest possible interventions to effectively prevent escapes with specific reference to Nakuru Main Prison.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Prisons institutions in Kenya face a phenomenon of rampant inmate escapes from its facilities. As a result, it is believed that there is an upsurge of insecurity within the community. Despite the prisons' core mandate being to ensure safe custody of inmates, a number of inmates are still able to escape out of the facilities without being detected. For the period 2013 to 2016, Nakuru main prison recorded an average of six to ten prisoners escaping annually. Findings from this study showed that by June 2019 two inmates had already successfully escaped from inside prison not mentioning those who escaped and recaptured without being recorded.

Reports emanating from police, family members and the media indicated that most of these escapees have a revenge motive against their accusers, family members, public officers and the society in general who have been victims of such escapes in the past. However, there is limited documented studies on how and why this phenomenon occurs in this facility. This study, therefore, sought to analyze the capacity of the security strategies employed at Nakuru main prison with a view of identifying its shortfalls and suggest possible interventions for effective prevention of inmate escapes in pursuit of community protection.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To examine the capacity of the security structures of Nakuru main prison on inmate escapes prevention.
- 2) To suggest possible interventions to enable Nakuru main prison effectively prevent inmate escapes.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive research design which involved the use of observation, case study approach and survey technique. This design enables the researcher to be in the natural environment of the study without interference with his normal activities. The study collected data from 142 junior prison officers based in Nakuru main prison. The data was analysed using the SPSS software package, both descriptively and use of thematic analysis. The data collected was then coded and subjected to SPSS categorized into themes according to the aimed of the research. Descriptive statistics analyzed percentages, tables and cross-tabulations to document the sociodemographic characteristics of the study population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This journal rides on data collected by the author on the capacity of prison security strategies in preventing inmate escapes with a focus on Nakuru main prison. The study interviewed three categories of respondents depending on their job cadres. This journal therefore looked into the views of junior cadre of prison officers who were the majority of the respondents in the study at about 80% of the total respondents who turned up for the study to understand their perspective in inmate escape prevention in Nakuru main prison.

Demographic information of the sample respondents

The results of the study showed the majority of the respondents in terms of gender were male at 93.7% whereas 6.3% were female. The explanation for the disparities in gender is because Nakuru main prison is a male prisons facility and according to Chapter 90 L.o.Kthe staff for such an

institution should be male. The study found out that the majority of the respondents were of secondary level of education at 48.6%, diploma at 31.7%, and certificate at 11.3%. The others which were below 10% were graduates, primary and post-graduate levels respectively. The other category sort for was the length of stay of the respondents in the institution of study to elicit institutional memory and the majority at 22.5% had stayed for 1-5 years, 21.1% had stayed for between 6 and 10 years and 3.5% of them had stayed for over 16 years in the said institution as illustrated in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic Data for the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	133	93.7
	Female	9	6.3
Highest education	Post graduate	1	0.7
	Graduate	6	4.2
	Diploma	45	31.7
	Certificate	16	11.3
	Secondary	69	48.6
	Primary	5	3.5
length of stay in the institution	1 - 5 years	32	22.5
	6 -10 years	30	21.1
	11-15 years	43	30
	16 years and above	37	30.3

Capacity of Nakuru Main Prison in Preventing Inmates Escapes

The results from the study indicated that 38 percent of the respondents said yes whereas 62 percent said No in relation to the question as to whether Nakuru main prison has the capacity to prevent escapes as indicated in figure 2 below. This therefore, implies that the strategies put in place to prevent escapes are inadequate and escapes are likely to continue to occur in the institution which is a threat to public security.

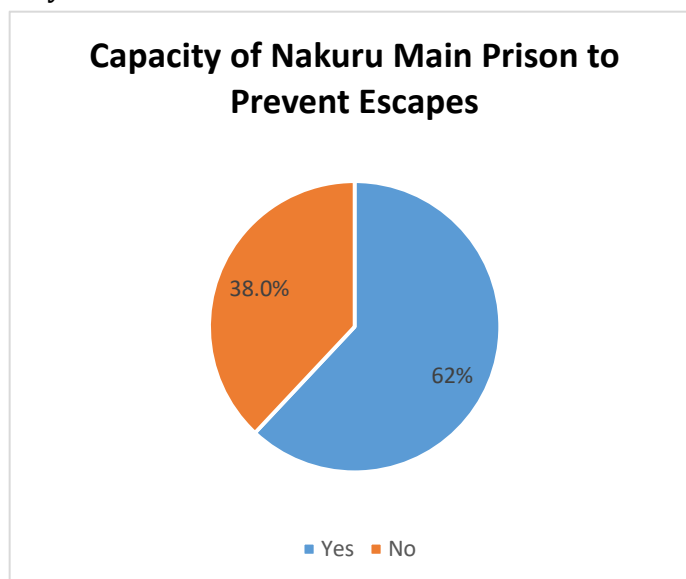


Figure 2 Capacity of Nakuru Main Prison to Prevent Escapes

The respondents who said yes gave the reasons for their responses that Nakuru main prison has High fenced wall and guards at watch towers at 42.9% respectively, good lighting at 11.3% and that the institution has strong gates and doors at 5.0% which are ideal for prevention of escapes.

Further, the respondents who said no to the question as to whether the institution has the capacity to prevent inmate escapes gave the following explanations for their answers; that there was lack of permanent perimeter fence at 47.4 %, old dilapidated buildings at 28.9%, lack of the use of technology e.g CCTV at 19.7%, inadequate lighting system at 14.5% and that there was increased escapes in the institution at 10.5 %. Others respondent below 10% included: overcrowding, lack of strong gates, poor deployment of security personnel, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, absence of emergency response system and inadequate uniforms as shown in the figure 3 below.

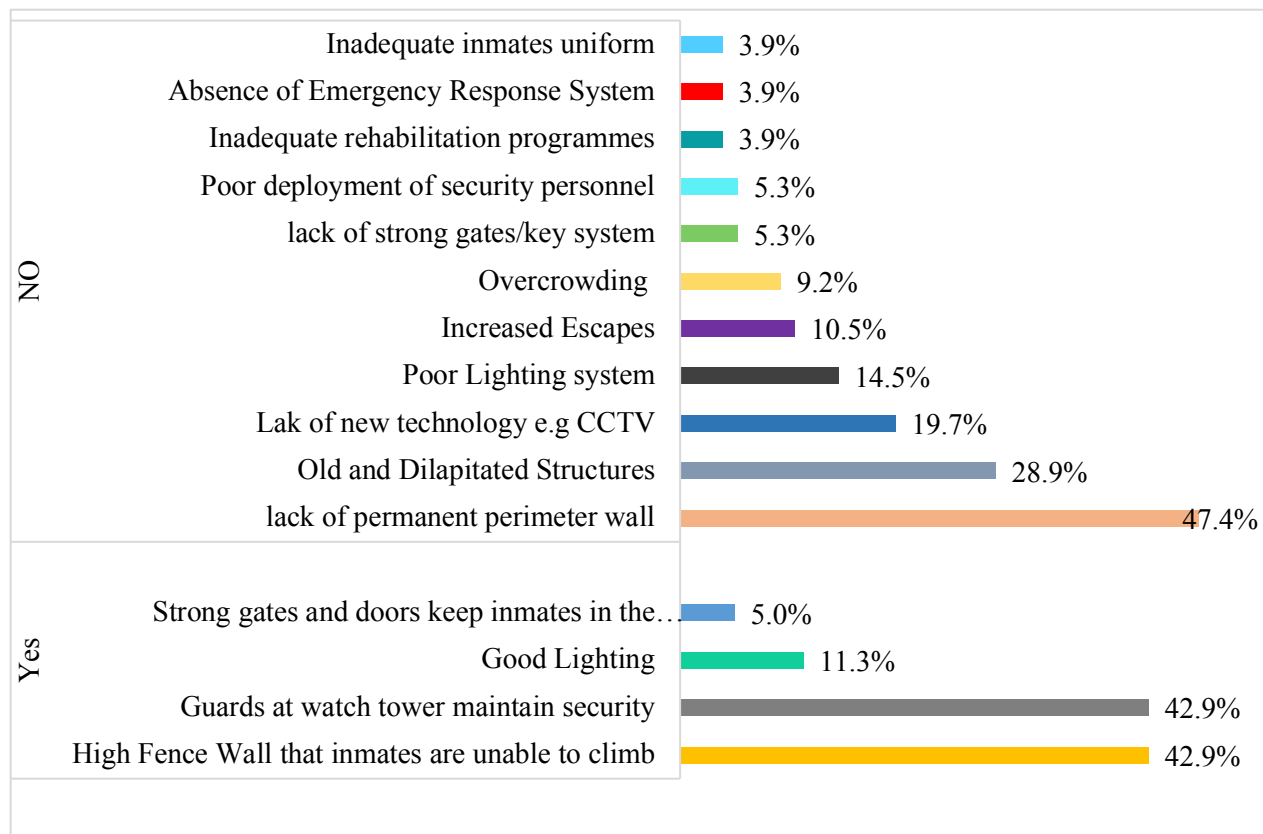


Figure 3 Attributes For Nakuru Main Prison

This was further triangulated by data from observation made by the researcher coupled with information received from Key informants supported these findings although they are perceived not to be adequate to provide security of inmates and prevention of escapes. The only existing infrastructures that seem to be security compliant were the blocks/cells which are made of concrete though they are very old and lack enough ventilation. Separation of blocks for segregation within the facility is done by the use of iron sheet fences which is poorly done and poses security threats to both inmates and officers since they can be used as weapons.

Another observation made was that the perimeter fence made of chain-link, barbed wire and Kei apples (live fence) planted around it which are overgrown and not well maintained and hampers

visibility for the officers doing surveillance at the security watch towers which are build outside the Kei apple (life fence) as shown in the figure 4 below.



Figure 4 Life Fence and a Security Watch Tower at Nakuru main Prison

From this findings above it is evident that the institution has inadequate security infrastructure to prevent inmates and thus the inadequacy could be the causative factors to inmate's escapes and the reason for some of the insecurity witnessed in the society.

Interventions to Enable Effective Escape Prevention

The results of the study showed that the majority of the respondents recommended construction of a modern security wall at 33.7% as a strategy to effectively prevent escapes. Other recommendations were: Use of new technology e.g. CCTV at 25.2%, erection of a proper and adequate watchtowers/Sentries at 15.1%, provision of adequate lighting system at 11.6%, conducting occasional Security checks, deployment of more security personnel, /escorts and alarm system at 4.0% respectively. The recommendations given which were below 4.0% included, Need for strong steel doors, use of electronic gadgets to search inmates, the use of canines, Keys and padlocks and adequate records management system as illustrated in the table 2.0 below.

Table 2 Interventions for Inmate Prevention

Interventions	Percent
Modern Perimeter wall	35.3%
Use of new technology e.g CCTV	25.2%
Erect proper and adequate watchtowers/Sentries at	15.1%
Adequate lighting system	11.6%
Occasional Security checks	4.0%
Deployment of more security personnel,/escorts	4.0%
Alarm system	4.0%
Need for strong steel doors	3.9%
use of electronic gadgets to search inmates	3.5%
Canines	1.9%
Keys and padlocks	1.2%
adequate records management system	1.2%

Discussions

The findings of this study showed that Nakuru main prison has no capacity to prevent escapes due to lack of permanent perimeter fence which is requisite in a facility of that nature. It was also established that the institution buildings are old dilapidated making it vulnerable to escapes in the sense that inmates could dig through the walls of their cells and cut through the life the chain-link fence superimposed by life fence from outside. It was also found out that the institution does not use of technology e.g CCTV which could be very instrumental in helping the guards to see activities happening in areas they are unable to cover physically and also could come in handy to reconstruct the crime scene when an escape has occurred. It was also noted that the institution has inadequate lighting system which is vital in illuminating the facility and therefore enable visibility of the all area. The findings of the study showed that there was increased escapes in the institution in and therefore necessitating a swift action to address the problem based on the interventions recommendations given by the respondents.

The interventions included: construction of a modern security wall with modern watch towers that facilitate good visibility and at the same time habitable for the security personnel. The walls also should be reinforced with the use of technology (CCTV) to support areas where physical presence by security personnel is not possible. The facility gates also needs to be constructed with strong and steel doors with modern locks and keys to also enable prevention of escapes who might want to escape through them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there are a number of glaring gaps in the security infrastructure of Nakuru main prison. Lack of modern perimeter wall, technology, inadequate lighting systems, lack of modern watch towers and the fact that there are evidence of increased escapes from the facility giving a clear indication that it is susceptible to escapes hence a dire need to address the problem by adopting the recommended measures.

Based on the results of this study, a number of recommendations have been suggested in the effort to address the challenge of inmate escapes from prison custody not only in Nakuru main Prison of the same level and facing similar security challenges.

There is a need for construction of a modern prison institution with a modern perimeter wall with strong and steel doors, there is a need for employment of advanced technology in the institution's surveillance system and access control systems by the use of CCTV among other security gadgets, there is also a need for Nakuru main prison to facelift its security watch towers to be habitable because as they are currently it is a health hazard to the staff and even passerby's because they hang precariously on metal bars and are made of old iron sheets and finally there is also need to deploy more security personnel to the institution to reinforce the existing personnel and including improving the institutions records management system.

References

- [1]. Coyle, A., (2005). Understanding Prisons; Key Issues in Policy and Practice: Open University Press: New York.
- [1]. Culp, R.F., (2005). Frequency and Characteristics of Prison Escapes in the United States: An Analysis of National Data. *The Prison Journal*, 85(3), 270-291.
- [2]. Culp, R. F., and Bracco, E. (2005). Examining Prison Escapes and Routine Activities Theory. *Corrections Compendium*, 30(3), 1-5, 25-27.
- [3]. Ewens W.J., (1972). The Sampling Theory of Selectively Neutral Alleles. *Theoret Popul Biol* 3: 87-112.
- [4]. Government of Western Australia., (2015). Escapes and Attempted Escapes from Corrections in Western Australia: office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. www.oics.wa.gov.au.
- [5]. Kelly B.R and Doyle J., (1999). Anti-Helicopter Strategies: Report on Anti-aircraft assisted escapes; Information & Library Services. NSW Department of corrective Services.
- [6]. Kothari. C. R., (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*; Second Revised Edition. New Age International (P) Limited, Publishers 4835/24, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi – 110002.
- [7]. Nyaura, J. E., and Ngugi, M. N., (2014). A Critical Overview of the Kenyan Prisons System: Understanding the Challenges of Correctional Practice: *International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research*: <http://www.ijisr.issr-journals.org/>.
- [8]. Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. (2015). Escapes and Attempted Escapes from Corrections in Western Australia. Level 5, Albert Facey House, 469 Wellington Street Perth, Western Australia 6000.
- [9]. Peterson, B., (2015). "Inmate-, Incident-, and Facility-Level Factors Associated With Escapes from Custody and Violent Outcomes". *Dissertations and Theses, 2014-Present*. Paper 606.