

Causes and Effects of Overcrowding at Prisons: A Study at the Ho Central Prison, Ghana

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the overcrowding situation at the Ho central prison. The causes, effects on officers and inmates, prevention and measures that could be adopted to address the causes and its adverse effect on the society. In this regards, it is found out that the prisoner's population at the Ho central prison has been more triple than the official capacity for which it was meant to contain. This was brought about by poor ventilation as the prison was built to accommodate 120 inmates now has a lock-up of almost 460 prisoners and others on remands. Furthermore, the finding and their implications have been enumerated and discussed. Among them is the drawing of attention of the appropriate authorities to the overcrowding and its related problems and how to decongest the prison in Ho. On the basis of findings, useful suggestions were made for the rectification of the problems which the study revealed. This includes the implementation of non-custodial sentences in a form of community service sentences, strengthening of the criminal justice system for speedy trial of suspects and the improvement in the conditions of service to motivate serving officers and to attract more qualified professional into the service for efficiency.

Keywords: Prison, Prisoner, Inmates and Overcrowding

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Human societies at all times have had some of her members deviated from the generally acceptable social norms. Such deviants are often referred to as criminals in many national laws. Many of these criminals are subjected to various measures intended to punish and/or reform them. Some of these measures include payment of fines, banishment, corporal and capital punishment, community service and the much popular imprisonment. Imprisonment has gradually replaced the much cruel forms of such measures like banishment, corporal and capital punishment over the last few centuries. Criminals who are treated by any of these measures are normally confined with the intention to reform and rehabilitate them to conform to the standards and expectations of the society. It is therefore no surprise that such institutions of confinements are now referred to, in contemporary parlance, as correctional institutions.

The World Prison Brief Walmsley (2001) reveals that over 8.7 million people are held in penal institutions throughout the world, either as pre-trial detainees or having been convicted and sentenced. In view of the fact that there are just over 6.1 billion people in the world, this implies that the world prison population rate is approximately 140 per 100,000 citizens. Half of these are in the United States, Russia, and China. There is a vast variation of prison populations from place to place, region to region, country to country, and continent to continent. The magnitude of the South African prison population is being questioned and criticized more and more by informed and well meaning persons and countries. The lack of sufficient alternatives to imprisonment manifests itself in overpopulation of prisons with all its negative implications.

Prison overcrowding and the resulting financial and human rights problems related to this phenomenon, remain one of the paramount concerns, and has been expressed by developed and developing countries. In order to comprehend the magnitude of the problems, it is imperative to first have an appreciation of the number of prisoners' incarcerated world wide.

In many parts of the world, for example, America, Russia and South Africa, the prison population has escalated during the 1990s. There has been over 20% growth in most of the European states and in the United States of America a growth between 60 and 85%. Elsewhere, the growth has been, over 33% in South Africa, 50% in Australia, 38% in New Zealand and 10% in Japan. Generally, the trend during the 1990s, at least in many of the developed countries, has been a rise in prison populations, often with a growth over the decade (Walmsley, 2001, p. 3).

In South Africa, prisons are severely overcrowded. Between 1996 and June 2001, the overall number of prisoners in South African prisons increased by 34%. The number of sentenced prisoners increased by 27%, and the number of those held awaiting trial increased by 54%. In December 1996, South African prisons had the capacity to accommodate 96,329 prisoners, but were holding 125,752 inmates. During that year, the level of overpopulation was 31%. By May 2000, prison capacity had increased to 100,384 prisoners, but the actual prisoner numbers had also increased to 171,880 inmates, amounting to overcrowding of 71% (Department of Correctional Services, 2000).

The overcrowding situation in prisons in Ghana is not different from that of the rest of the world. As of

April 22, 2013, total prison population of inmates in the country stood at 13,720 against official capacity of 8,004 with 2,595 being remand prisoners alone. This implies that the capacity has been exceeded by 56.6 per cent. The Ashanti Region, which has six prison establishments at Kumasi, Adansi-Ahinsan, Obuasi and Akrofrom by the end of 2006 had recorded 2,229 populations of inmates against their official capacities, thereby forcing inmates to sleep in turns as pointed out by officialdom. (www.amnestyusa.org).

The Ho central Prison service has a chequered history

Therefore, the exact year the prison was established is not known but available record indicates that it was established earlier than 1948. The prison was one of the four (4) prisons in the then Togoland territory under United Kingdom Trusteeship and was treated as an integral part of the prison system of the then Gold Coast. It was established to cater for offenders who were convicted for various offences in the Region. It was classified as a local prison and for that matter kept prisoner's serving sentences of less than two (2) years only.

The prison is located at Ho-Bankoe a suburb of Ho on 4.147 acre land. Before the service became autonomous in 1964 and was renamed Ghana prison service, District agents of Ho acted as the officer in-charge of the station. It was 1964 that the service appointing prison officers as officer in-charge. No records of who the officer in-charge was between 1964 and 1967.

Initially, there was only one block with six (6) cells, a major structural expansion was carried out of the station in 1948. The programme which was designed to be completed in 1949 included the construction of additional separate accommodation for convicted prisoners/ remand prisoners, a new office and a store room, additional cell block, a new kitchen, bath house and a new latrine,

the area was enclosed by the walls considerably increased when the wall were demolished and rebuilt.

The expansion enable proper classification of prisoners' was carried out at the station. The average amount of space available for each prisoner was 200 cubic feet.

In 1964, a one storey block was erected on the old administration block to provide additional offices for the office-in-charge, the second in command, other clerical staffs, superior officers and account office.

Problem statement

In most human societies, both past and present, there is the need for development. However, many are of the opinion that most youth who could have contributed to economic development eventually finds themselves as social misfits.

At present, much attention is devoted to the part of the function of the prisons, which is focused on safe custody of prisoners and less emphasis on welfare, rehabilitation and reformation of convicted offenders. With increasing inmates population as a result of high crime rate coupled with the natural growth of national population, little has been done to either expand or equip the existing one. This condition has caused the health condition of both inmates and officers at risk. The prison facilities were poorly designed such that they are unable to contain the numbers and the present population in the Region as a result, they service are unable to perform its social as an integrative organization.

Consequently, there appears to be loosening of economic and social developments. This has resulted in finding most of the youth in increasing numbers in the prison. This was built by our colonial masters for a daily lock up of 120 inmates but currently has a daily lock up of 450 - 470 inmates which makes the prison over populated. If crime rate continues to increase at such a rate, then there is a cause to suspect that criminal behavior will soon reach a catastrophic level in the Region.

This study seeks to identify the causes and effects of overcrowding at the Ho central prisons.

From the outlined above, it is clear that the problems do not augur well for a peaceful, secure and a good moral development of the nation.

Specific objectives

The general objective of this study was to examine and identify the causes and effects of overcrowding at the Ho prison. Specifically, the study revolved around the following objectives:

- i. To determine the rate at which inmates are remanded in the prison.
- ii. To determine the rate at which inmates are released.
- iii. Examine the effect of overcrowding in the prison
- iv. To identify other factors that accounts for overpopulation in Ho prison.

Research questions

1. What were the factors that account for the overcrowding in the prison?
2. What were the effects of overcrowding in the prisons?
3. What was the rate at which inmates are remanded?
4. What was the rate at which inmates are released?

Limitations

In undertaking a study of this nature, the researcher was constrained by a number of factors which includes the following:

The study was undertaken concurrently with academic work and for that matter time was limited

The study was limited to Ghana prison service Ho and this made it difficult to generalize the situation pertaining in other prison institutions

In addition, we cannot guarantee that officers provided honest answers to the questions, since the study involved a sensitive matter.

The study involves the use of questionnaires, interview schedule and photocopy of relevant materials. All these involve money.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of literature and conceptual framework that has a bearing on the research topic. It tries to consider the theoretical framework and empirical evidence of the study. The following has been done about literature review:

2.1 The concept of overcrowding

Stinchcomb and Fox (1999) contend that the consequence of housing too many people in too little space means that:

“Inmates are double-bunked in small cells designed for one or forced to sleep on mattresses in unheated prison gyms, day rooms, hallways, or basements. Others sleep on makeshift trailers, tents, or converted ferries. Space that had once been devoted to work, study and recreational programmes are being turned into dormitories”

Neser (1993:271) distinguishes three forms of capacity in terms of which occupancy rates can be expressed:

1. Estimated capacity- the number of beds or –prisoners de facto authorized by correctional administrators to be assigned to a prison.
2. Operational capacity- the number of beds or prisoners, which can be accommodated consistent with the maintenance of programmes and services.
3. Designed capacity- this forms part of the architectural planning of an institution. Prison over-population thus comes about when the number of prisoners in a particular prison can no longer be coped with the infrastructure.

2.2 Prison and punishment

For a long time, prison sentencing has been associated with the aim of correcting criminal behaviour with the rehabilitation of criminals to become law-abiding citizens. Imprisonment is a mode of punishing wrong-doers and of protecting citizens from them. But the underlying principle of the prison system is that of ‘improving’ the individual to a fit and proper part in society.

Prisons are no longer generally physically maltreated, as was once common practice-though physical beatings are by no means unknown, even in women’s prisons. However, prisoners suffer many other types of deprivation. They are deprived not only for their freedom, but of a proper income, the company of their families and previous friends, heterosexual relationships, their own clothing and other personal items. They frequently live in overcrowded conditions and have to accept strict disciplinary procedures and the regimentation of their daily lives.

Living in these conditions tends to drive a wedge between prison inmates and the outside society, rather than adjusting their behavior to the norms of that society. Prisoners have to come into terms with an environment quite distinct from ‘the outside’ and the habits and attitudes they learn in prison are quite of them exactly the opposite of those they are supposed to acquire. For instance, they may develop a grudge against ordinary citizenry, learn to accept violence as normal, gain contact with seasoned criminals which they maintain when freed, and acquire criminal skills about which they previously knew little. It is therefore not surprising that rates of recidivism i.e. repeat offending by those who have been, in borstal or prison before are disturbingly high. Over sixty(60%) percent of all men set free after serving prison sentences are re-arrested within four years of their original crimes. The actual rate of re-offending is presumably high than this, as no doubt some of those returning to criminal activities are not caught.

2.3 Overcrowding in prisons

2.3.1 Delay in the Administration of Justice

It is beyond doubt that when more than 60 percent of the total prison admissions are awaiting trial, the administration of criminal justice must be faulty. Olawoye identified several factors as responsible for delay in the administration of criminal justice. First is the inadequacy of the courts and judicial personnel. The performance of some of them leaves a lot to be desired. Some are lazy, while others are not committed, and cases are adjourned at the slightest excuse. In addition, legal practitioners frequently go to court unprepared. They manufacture all sorts of reasons why adjournment should be granted, and some are just simply incompetent. The preliminary investigation and the Assize system are contributing factors also. These are colonial “hold-overs”,

which remain in some states. The system of handling all criminal cases at one particular time of the year usually leads to a situation in which cases that do not fall within the period are not handled, and a consequent backlog of cases is left pending. Further, investigations are often not completed because the law is unduly technical, and, more significantly, the public is very reluctant to assist the police due to past experience.

Additional problems stem from grossly inadequate equipment in some states. For example, in some cases of dangerous driving in which death occurred, it took six months or more for the compilation of the "case diary" because of shortages of typewriters and typists at police stations. Thus, cases expected to take three months take eighteen months on the average. In forgery cases, because there are few handwriting experts serving in the northern states, it takes about six months to get them to give evidence.

Delay occurs also in criminal appeals because of the following: (1) the indifference and incompetence of secretarial staff, (2) the fact that the records of proceedings may be spread throughout many record books because of numerous adjournments, (3) frequent transfers of magistrates, which makes it difficult for them to compile records of proceedings, and (4) the illegible handwriting of some judicial officials (University of Lagos, Faculty of Law, 1973). All of the above in one way or another contributes to the "overcrowding," especially in relation to the number of persons awaiting trial. Unless these delays are reduced, there cannot be reductions in the numbers of those awaiting trial.

Lack of legal aid accounts for additional delays in the cases of many inmates awaiting trial in custody. The high levels of illiteracy and poverty have caused a substantial number of inmates to languish in prisons because they cannot afford payment of legal fees. Their illiteracy renders them unable even to take advantage of the limited free legal aid available. These individuals constitute the bulk of the inmates who are released when some judges visit the prisons on a routine basis. Added to the above problems are the stringent criteria often imposed for granting bail by the courts.

2.3.2 Overuse of Prison Sentences by Judges

It would appear from the characteristics of the prison population that there has been overuse of imprisonment as a means of punishment. There is no other way to account for the fact that about one-third of the convicted prisoners are incarcerated for stealing without violence, about 80 percent are serving not more than two years of imprisonment, and more than 55 percent are first offenders. The presence of debtors, mentally disordered persons, and pregnant and nursing mothers is further evidence. There are many better alternatives for dealing with these individuals.

2.3.3 Over-Criminalization

It is not unlikely that there has been an increase in criminal activity, which has contributed to the "overcrowding" in Ghanaian prisons, especially now that the rewards have become so conspicuous in the opulence enjoyed by white-collar criminals and "drug barons." In the absence of accurate data, such a rise in criminal activity is a reasonable assumption. It likely is related to the deteriorating economic situation. However, a factor that probably has contributed to both criminal activity and criminalization of many behaviors is the spate of decrees produced by the military regime.

2.3.4 Few Resources to Build Additional Prisons

According to reports, most of the Ghanaian prisons were built during the colonial period. Since then, very little effort has been made either to build additional facilities or to modernize existing ones. With the increased prison admissions in recent years, "overcrowding" became inevitable.

2.4 Effects of Overcrowding in Prisons

2.4.1 Spreading of infectious diseases

The overcrowding of prisons leads to the spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, chicken pox etc. in south Africa, the South African Prisoners' Organization for Human Rights (SAPOHR), has contended that it will take the government to court for violating the prisoner's rights unless it urgently addressed overcrowded conditions. (www.iafrica.com, 2003). According to SAPOHR, the overcrowding in prisons has contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. It further went on to say that conditions in prisons were inhumane and undermined human dignity.

2.4.2 It undermines social control in prisons

Overcrowding in prisons makes it difficult to control the prisoners. The prison over-population leads to higher cell temperatures and noise levels, poorer ventilation in cells, idleness, disagreement and irritation among the prisoners. This creates high potential for conflict among prisoners and can negatively influence the relationship between staff and prisoners (Neser, 1993, p. 280). The overcrowding in the prisons breeds a whole lot of violence and rape.

2.4.3 Mental problems

Reid (1997:555) contends that in addition to increased violence, overcrowded prisons may induce stress in inmates and staff and result in physical and mental problems.

2.4.4 Poor prison conditions

The overcrowding in prisons leads to poor prison conditions. The personal living space allotted to inmates is severely restricted. Inmates are always in constant presence of other, inmates sleep with the knowledge that they may be molested or assaulted by their fellows at any time. They must urinate and defecate, unscreened, in the presence of others (Reid 1997, p. 554). This condition makes it nearly impossible to create an environment conducive to preparing someone for life outside prison. The strain on resources is enormous and one cannot expect to see good citizens emerging from an environment that cannot take care of the basic needs of prisoners (Muntingh, 2002).

2.4.5 Access to programmes

According to Reid (1997), when facilities are overcrowded, the transportation of inmates to and from programme sites becomes problematic. Those who will want to even study to further their education in the prisons may not get the chance to do so. In cases where even they have the chance, they may not get the peace of mind to study.

2.4.6 Cost to the state

Another effect of overcrowded prisons is the cost that the state has to bear. More inmates mean that the states will have to increase its budget for the prison service. This means that the state will have to shift some resources from other sectors of the economy and channel it to prisons.

2.4.7 A case for community service sentencing

In view of the ever increasing prisoner population leading to overcrowding in the country's prisons, there is a case strong for the introduction of community service as an alternative to incarceration.

Community service is a non custodial sentence which requires an offender to make specified reparations to the community. Instead of a prison sentence, the offender is ordered by the court to perform unpaid work in the community. It is a way of getting the offender to give something back to the community for the harm done by his/her anti-social behavior.

It is not every convict who can qualify for community service. Dangerous criminals such as armed robbers, murderers, serial killers, terrorist, drug barons and a host of others will not be eligible for community service because of the risk they pose to society.

Community service is reserved for those offenders that would normally attract a short sentence. Offenders such as theft, contempt of court, fighting, dishonestly receiving, drink diving and other traffic offences such as driving without license could be considered for the community service order. The offender is deemed not to pose real danger to society.

Why is there the need for community service? The reason is simple, prison are expensive to manage. It is huge costs to the tax payer given the rather large number of prisoners the country's prisons. We feed, clothe and provide medical care and other basic necessities of life to our prisoners including rehabilitation facilities. The cost involved in the management of prisons is astronomical to say the least. Community service which is non-custodial is less expensive and easy to administer.

Before a court issues a community service order, it will need a social enquiry report on the offender. The report which will normally be prepared by an officer from the Department of Social Welfare will consider the work skills, qualifications, experience, interests and the willingness of the offender to agree to do unpaid work in the community should the order be issued. In other words, the judicial authorities will have to study the report determine whether an offender is suitable for community service.

Community service should benefit both the community and the offender. Alec Samuel's said "A community service order is intended to be rehabilitative and reformatory, constructive and positive, therapeutic, and if not punitive at least containing a strong element of discipline and personal rigour and effort" There are ground rules to ensure the successful implementation of community service orders.

An offender is required to do unpaid work for a specified number of hours that the court spells out in the order. He will do the work under the supervision of an officer from the Department of Social welfare.

There are situations where the court may order an offender to go to a specific institution for treatment of such conditions as anger management, drug and alcohol addiction among others. He must go to the treatment centre on a regular basis for the management of his condition. Unnecessary excuses will not be tolerated by the supervising officer.

He must be punctual and perform tasks to a standard acceptable by the supervising authority. The offender is not allowed to leave the community without taking express permission from his supervisor.

During the period of community service, the offender is not allowed to use drugs or take alcohol because of its implications. The type of work the offender is required to do should be available in the community. Offenders could be made to do any of the following without being paid: tree planting, desilting drains and gutters, weeding or cleaning the premises of courthouse, school or clinics as the case may be. If offender fails to complete the amount of work required by the court order, the supervisor will bring the offender before the court to justify the violation. If the court is not satisfied with the explanation given by the offender, it may impose in fine or commit the person to prison for up to the maximum period of time provided for under the

applicable law.

Community service is strongly recommended for offenders who could face full time jail from one month to one year. Community helps the offender to reintegrate into the community without much difficulty. This can happen since the offender is already in his community and can work to support his or her family. One of the good things about community service is the potential it has to reduce recidivism. Commenting on the usefulness of community service, Francis Crook, director of the Howard League wrote “for the majority of non-dangerous offenders, community services are more likely to reduce the seriousness and frequency of re-offending. They help a person to take responsibility for their actions and put something back into the community rather than sitting out their time lying on a prison bunk.”

From the discourse above, one can confidently conclude that community service can greatly benefit the nation. I humbly appeal to parliament, the peoples’ representatives, the chief justice and the prison authority to seriously consider the introduction of community service in criminal justice administration. (*Daily Graphic 31 July, 2012*)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and the details of the techniques employed in collecting the data for the research as well as the tool used to analyze the data. It also describes the settings used in the study as well as the survey participants. Also discussed here is the research process, reliability and the validity of the research data.

3.1 Research design

Descriptive research or survey was used for the study. This involves collecting data to answer the research questions in chapter one. Descriptive data are usually collected through questionnaire, interviews or observation. Descriptive survey aims primarily at describing, observing and documenting aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs rather than explaining them.

3.2 Study population

The study population of staff at Ghana prison Service in Ho is one hundred and eleven (111). And the sample size includes only the staff of Ghana prison service. The categories of the study population are made up of senior ranks that are made up of administration and junior ranks also made up of station guards and artisans.

3.3 Sampling and sampling procedure

Respondents were randomly selected, meaning every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected to the sample. The sample size is the staff that stays or work in the Ho prison. This is justifiably so, because the town is a municipal area. This means they have all the various cultures, ethnic groupings and behaviour that can be found in Ghana. Then again, if you look at the population of workers in the service, they form about 30.5% of the workforce of the entire Service in Ghana.

3.4 Sources of data

The data for this research work was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data were the fieldwork the researcher undertook at the study area –Ho central prison. The primary data was collected from the subjects through questionnaires, interviews and observations. The secondary data was collected from documented materials which have direct bearing on the topic under study. They included published books, newspapers, journals, news bulletin and the internet. The Researcher visited the Balme Library of the University of Ghana.

3.5 Data collection technique

The research was conducted between March, 2013 and May 2013 in the prison. The researcher administered the questionnaire himself. He made a visit to the prison and the prison Headquarters’ and was given an approval letter to go to Ho central prison. This was to explain to them his intention and the purpose of the study.

The data collection technique adopted was the administration of questionnaires. Each staff member was given a two page questionnaire and given information on the causes and effects of overcrowding in the facility. A total of 50 respondents collected the questionnaire and they were all literates. The data was collected from the respondents around April, 2013 after the completion of the questionnaires.

The participants were asked on the questionnaire about their personal attributes e.g. sex, age, profession and educational level so as to know how they can identify the causes of overcrowding in the prison. They were asked to indicate whether they were affected in any form of health. Those who responded ‘yes’ to the question were asked to indicate the type of effects. They were requested to give their perceptions on causes of

overcrowding and how it can be reduced or better still eliminated/controlled in Ghana Prison Service - Ho.

3.6 Data Analysis

Collecting data in a raw form, that is before these data have been processed and analyzed, convey very little meaning to most people. These data therefore needed to be processed to make them useful, that is to turn them into information. The tool used for the data processing and analysis was the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents findings and discussions from the field. The purpose of this study as noted from the previous chapters is to identify the causes and effect of overcrowding at the prison. Frequency and percentage table has been provided to aid the analysis of the responses.

4.1 Background of respondents

The questionnaire deals with the demographic data of the respondents. It highlighted the sex, age, work experience, academic qualification and professional ranking of the respondents.

Sex of respondents

Table 1 looks at sex of the respondents. This was included in the questionnaire to describe the number of male and female staff of Ghana prison service Ho.

Table 1: Sex of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	41	82.0
Female	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

From the analysis of responses in table 1, 41 (82%) of the respondents are male while 9 (18%) are female. This indicates that majority of the staff in Ghana prison service are male and the female staff form the minority.

Age distribution of respondents

A number of age ranges were included in the questionnaire for the respondents to tick. This was done to enable the researcher know the age range of the Ghana prison service staff if not their specific age.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Ages	Frequency	Percentage %
30-34	24	48.0
35-44	13	26.0
45-50	8	16.0
51 and above	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

From Table 2, it can be seen that 24 (48%) of the staff is within the range of 30-34, 13 (26%) are with the age range of 35 – 44. 8 (16%) are within the range of 45 – 50, while 5 (10%) are within the range of 56 years and above. This shows that many of the staffs are within the age range of 30-34 years and the age range of 51 years and above form the minority.

Table 3. Marital status of respondents

marital status	Frequency	Percentage %
Single	16	32.0
Married	34	68.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

Table 3 presents the marital status of the youth respondents. 16 respondents representing 32% were single, 34 were married representing 68% and none of them had divorced.

Working experience

This item was added to the questionnaire to enable the researcher know the number of years respondents have been working with the Ghana prison service.

Table 4: Working experience

working experience	Frequency	Percentage %
1-5yrs	17	34.0
6-10yrs	12	24.0
11-16yrs	11	22.0
16yrs above	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey,2013.

The data in Table 4 shows that 10 (20%) of the respondents have 16years and above work experience, 11 (22%) have work between 11 – 16 years, 12 (24%) have work between 6 – 10 years and 17 (34%) of the staff have work experience between 1 – 5 years. The table depicts that majority of the staff have 1- 5 years and above work experience.

Academic qualification of respondents

This item was included in the questionnaire to enable the researcher elicit information on the academic qualification of the respondents. Analysis of their responses is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Academic qualification of respondents

Academic qualification	Frequency	Percentage %
Certificates	27	54.0
Diploma	6	12.0
Degree	5	10.0
Others	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field ,survey, 2013.

The data in Table 5 indicates that 12 (24%) of the respondents hold Other qualification such as NVTI and some are tradesmen, 5 (10%) of the respondents hold degree whiles another 6(12%) holds diploma. The table shows that majority of the respondent, 27 (54%) hold certificates qualifications.

Professional rank

To find the professional qualification of the respondents, the following item was posed in the questionnaire by the researcher. Analysis of the responses is presented in Table 5.

Table 6: Professional rank

Ranks	Frequency	Percentage %
senior ranks	10	20.0
junior ranks	40	80.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

Analysis of the data in Table 6 shows that 10 (20%) of the respondents are holding Senior ranks position, whiles 40 (80%) of the respondents forms the workforce of the junior rank at the Ghana prison service Ho.

The following item on the questionnaire sought from the respondents on the factors that affect their attitudes towards work. These are shown in Table 6.

Table 7: Current enrolment in the facility.

This was added to the questionnaire to seek the views of the respondent to know the number of current enrolment in the facility (prison)

Current enrolment	Frequency	Percentage %
420-430	10	20.0
431-440	17	34.0
441-450	12	24.0
451-460	11	22.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey,2013

In the analysis of the Table 7 above shows that 11 (22%) of the respondent (Officers of the prison) said the current enrolment in the facility was 451-460, 12 (24%) indicated that the enrolment was 441-450. 17 (34%)

said that the enrolment was 420-430. This shows that the number of inmates is more than what the facility can accommodate which are 120 inmates. This information's were obtained from the prison officers and some secondary data of the prison.

Table 8: Respondents perception of overcrowding

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	41	82.0
No	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

In the Table 8, 9 (18%) of the respondents (officers and inmates) said the number does not amount to overcrowding while 41 (82%) said the number amounts to overcrowding. This indicate that there was overcrowding in the prison or not.

Table 9: Possible causes of overcrowding

Possible causes of overcrowding	Frequency	Percentage %
Adjournment of cases	14	28.0
Frequent crime committals	12	24.0
Inadequate cells	7	14.0
In ability to pay legal fees	17	34.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

From the Table 9 above, 7 (14%) of the respondents (officers of the prison) said inadequate cells was the possible cause of overcrowding, 12 (24%) said frequent crime committal was the possible cause, 14 (28%) said adjournment of cases was the cause while 17 (34 %) said the inability to pay legal fees was the cause of overcrowding. This indicates that majority of the respondent agreed that their inability to pay legal fees was the cause of overcrowding in the prison.

Table 10: Respondents perception of effect on inmates and officers

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	32	64.0
No	18	36.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey,2013.

In the Table10 above, 18 (36%) of the respondents (both officers and inmates) said overcrowding in the prison does not have any effect on inmates and officers while 32 (64 %) said it had effects on inmates and officers. This indicates that overcrowding in the prison had effects on inmates and officers.

Table 11: Types of effects

Types of effects	Frequency	Percentage %
Spread of contagious disease	30	60.0
Excessive heat	5	10.0
Suffocation	3	6.0
Discomfort	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey,2013.

In Table 11, 3 (6%) of the respondents (officers and inmates) said suffocation was the type of effect, 5 (10 %) said excessive heat was the type of effect, 12 (24%) mention discomfort while 30 (60%) said the spread of contagious diseases was the type of effects.

This indicates that, the spread of contagious disease was the type of diseases that affects both the officers and inmates in the facility.

Table 12: Suggestion for corrections

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentages %
Building of more prison	29	58.0
Transfer of inmates to other prison	7	14.0
Introduction of community sentence	14	28.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

In Table 12 above, 7 (14 %) of the respondents (officers) suggested the transfer of inmates to other prison, 14 (28 %) suggested the introduction of community sentence while 29 (58 %) suggested the building of more prisons. This indicates that majority of the respondents suggested the building of more prison to decongest the existing one.

Table 13: Rates at which inmates are remanded

Rates Remanded	Frequency	Percentage%
Daily	12	24.0
Weekly	6	12.0
Monthly	24	48.0
Yearly	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

From the Table 13 above, 6 (12%) of the respondents said inmates are remanded weekly, 8 (16%) of the respondents yearly, 12 (24%) said Daily while 24 (48%) said monthly. This indicates that majority of the respondents said inmates were remanded monthly.

Table 14: Rates at which inmates are released

Rates Released	Frequency	Percentage %
Daily	1	2.0
Weekly	4	8.0
Monthly	5	10.0
Yearly	40	80.0
Total	50	100.0

Source. Field survey, 2013.

In the Table 14 above, 1(2.0%) of the respondent said inmates are released Daily, 4(8%) said Weekly, 5(10%) said Monthly while 40(80%) said Yearly. This indicates that majority of the respondent said the inmates were released Yearly.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary of the study, conclusion drawn from the findings as well as recommendation made to stakeholders.

5.1 Summary

The focus of this study was to examine the causes and effects of overcrowding at the Ho central prison. A sample size of 50 was used in conducting the study and out of this, 41 of the respondent are males from Ho central prison and 9 of the respondents were female from the Ho central prison and the researcher used structured questionnaire for the study. Three research questions were posed to generate responses from the staffs. The target population of this study included some of the staff in the central prison. The main instrument used was questionnaire, interview and data collected was analyzed.

From the research conducted, majority of the respondents understand and knows the causes and effects of overcrowding on both the officers and inmates respectively. With regards to the findings about the major cause of overcrowding in the prison is the frequent adjournment of cases at the court. The inability of the criminal justice system to carry out due diligent work on these remands prisoners turn to delay the cases leading to overcrowding in the prison.

Also, the inability of individuals in the society to pay for legal fee charged by lawyers to defend their cases made people to languish in the prison.

Furthermore, from the study, the prison facility was to accommodate a daily lock up of 120 inmates but now the numbers ranges from 420-460 inmates. This shows that the inmates were more than the official and maximum capacity of the prison.

Last but not the least, it was found out that contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, measles and other skin diseases affect both the inmates and prison officers because they all live within the same facility and not considering the excessive stench and heat from the cells.

5.2 Conclusions

Prison overcrowding is quickly becoming a major financial and controversial problem in the Ghana today. There are now more than two-thirds of inmates of people in Ho prison in jail or been remand prison, and soon there will be half a million in Ho prison alone. With that being said, two-thirds are confined in less than 200 cubic feet of floor space. While prison conditions have not improved considerably in many ways, the present correctional system is still struggling to deal with the same problems that the other prison has experienced in the past. Many correctional facilities are operating under hazardous conditions, which include operating past the maximum capacity. Overcrowding in prisons and inmate to inmate violence appears to be closely related as well as intolerable living conditions, which contribute to many of the problems in the prisons, which seem to be unconstitutional. Other factors including, poor health and the spread of diseases among inmates, and several others are inhuman for a democratic state of Ghana.

Nevertheless, many consider imprisonment to be the punishment of choice. They feel that when the offender is jailed, justice is served. The paradox of imprisonment lies in society's expectations: the community wants retribution, as well as rehabilitation. Interestingly, for many, sending people to prison is not enough; they insist that offenders should be under hard labour forgetting that government has to provide for their needs in the prison.

5.3 Recommendations

To address the outlined causes of overcrowding and its resultant adverse effect on the convicted/remands inmates, the Ho central prison and the nation at large, the following measures are suggested to stakeholders:

First of all, imprisonment should be reserved for only violent crimes and criminals who pose a real danger to society. The courts should be encouraged to make use of alternative sanctions to imprisonment thus Community service should be encouraged and introduced to reduce the congestion in our prisons. Non-custodial community sanctions and measures, which are alternatives to imprisonment, should be exercised more frequently and with due regard to the needs of both victims and offenders. Implementation of penal sanctions within the community of non-violent offenders should be encouraged, as they may well offer in the long term better protection for society while offenders continue to assume social responsibilities.

Also, the government must do more to help ex-convicts resettle into society so that the tax payer can benefit from their contributions to development. It must provide funds to support projects and programmes that promote the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

Parliament must also take the initiative to expunge from our statute books the law that bars ex-convicts from being employed by the state and public institutions in general. In doing, so it will reduce the rate of recidivism which leads to overcrowding in the prison.

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