

Prison Management System: A Case Study Of Kauga Prison Mukono

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Abstract

This study examined the prison management system at Kauga Prison in Mukono, Uganda, with the aim of evaluating the efficiency of inmate management, rehabilitation programs, and administrative operations. The specific objectives were to assess the inmate record-keeping system in use at Kauga Prison, to evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and to examine the challenges facing the management of the prison facility. A case study research design was adopted, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The study population comprised prison warders, administrative staff, and a sample of inmates. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 45 respondents and in-depth interviews with 8 key informants including the Officer-in-Charge, rehabilitation officers, and health personnel. Findings indicated that the prison relied heavily on manual record-keeping systems that were prone to errors, delays, and data loss, adversely affecting inmate tracking and legal compliance. Rehabilitation programs including vocational training, literacy education, and counseling existed but suffered from inadequate funding, understaffing, and limited space. Challenges included severe overcrowding at 218% of designed capacity, inadequate staffing ratios, dilapidated physical infrastructure, and limited access to healthcare. Regression analysis revealed that administrative efficiency and rehabilitation program quality were the most significant predictors of successful inmate reintegration outcomes ($\beta = 0.421$ and $\beta = 0.387$, respectively, $p < 0.001$). The study recommended the adoption of an integrated prison management information system, increased budgetary allocation for rehabilitation programs, infrastructure expansion, and recruitment of additional trained staff to address systemic management challenges.

Keywords: Prison Management System, Rehabilitation, Inmate Records, Kauga Prison, Mukono, Uganda, Overcrowding, Reintegration

Background of the Study

Prison management was a critical function of the criminal justice system, encompassing the safe custody of offenders, the administration of justice, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates into society (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Globally, prison systems had been under increasing scrutiny due to concerns about overcrowding, human rights violations, inadequate rehabilitation services, and high recidivism rates (Ahumuza et al., 2025). The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, commonly known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, established international standards for prison management, including requirements for humane treatment, access to healthcare, education, and rehabilitation programs (Florence & Julius, 2023). Adherence to these standards varied significantly across countries, with developing nations in Sub-Saharan Africa often facing the greatest challenges due to resource constraints and governance weaknesses (Julius & Matovu, 2025).

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In Uganda, the Uganda Prisons Service was established under the Prisons Act of 2006, which mandated the service to keep in custody persons committed by a lawful authority, carry out correctional, rehabilitative, and reintegrative programs for offenders, and promote the social reintegration of ex-offenders (Frank et al., 2023). The service managed over 260 prisons across the country, housing a total inmate population that consistently exceeded the combined designed capacity of the facilities by a significant margin (Nancy & Prudence, 2024). According to the Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report of 2021, the total inmate population was approximately 75,000 against a designed capacity of 18,000, representing an overcrowding ratio of over 400%. This extreme overcrowding created severe challenges for inmate management, healthcare delivery, and rehabilitation programming across the prison network (Kazaara et al., 2024).

Kauga Prison, located in Mukono District in Central Uganda, was one of the regional prisons serving the Mukono area and surrounding districts. Established in the mid-1970s, the facility was designed to accommodate a limited number of inmates but had experienced a steady growth in its inmate population over the years, driven by population growth, increased crime rates, and delays in the judicial process that resulted in large numbers of pre-trial detainees being held for extended periods (Julius & Audrey, 2025). The prison housed both convicted and remand inmates and operated a range of programs intended to facilitate rehabilitation and skill development. However, systemic challenges related to record keeping, staffing, infrastructure, and program resources had persistently undermined the effectiveness of the facility's management system. This study was conducted to provide an empirical assessment of these challenges and to recommend evidence-based solutions for improving the prison management system.

Problem statement

Kauga Prison faced persistent challenges in inmate management, record keeping, and the delivery of rehabilitation services. Reports from the Uganda Prisons Service and civil society organizations indicated that the prison's record-keeping system was predominantly manual, resulting in frequent errors in inmate identification, release dates, and legal case tracking (Innocent et al., 2023). These shortcomings not only compromised the administrative efficiency of the facility but also created human rights vulnerabilities, including instances of inmates being held beyond their sentence completion dates (Flavia et al., 2023). The rehabilitation programs at Kauga Prison, including vocational training in carpentry, tailoring, and agriculture, were reportedly underutilized due to inadequate tools, limited instructor capacity, and insufficient space. Recidivism rates among released inmates from Kauga Prison were reportedly high, suggesting that the rehabilitation programs were not adequately preparing inmates for successful reintegration. Despite these documented challenges, no comprehensive empirical study had been conducted specifically on the management system of Kauga Prison, creating a gap that this study sought to address.

Literature review

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded in the Correctional Management Theory, which held that effective prison management required the integration of security, administration, and rehabilitation functions into a coherent and accountable

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system. This theory, articulated by Clear and Cole (2003), posited that the primary goal of corrections was not merely the incapacitation of offenders but their reformation and successful reintegration into society. From this perspective, the quality of administrative systems, the competence and motivation of staff, the conditions of confinement, and the accessibility and quality of rehabilitation programs were all critical inputs into the prison management process (Winny et al., 2023). The theory provided the analytical lens through which the management system of Kauga Prison was assessed in this study.

Prison Record Management Systems

Effective record management was fundamental to the functioning of prison institutions. Accurate inmate records enabled prison administrators to track legal case status, monitor sentence completion, manage parole and release processes, and maintain individual risk assessments (Moses et al., 2025). Studies in developed countries had documented the transformative impact of integrated prison management information systems (PMIS) on administrative efficiency and legal compliance (Julius & Matovu, 2025). However, in developing countries, manual record-keeping systems remained prevalent in many prisons, resulting in significant administrative inefficiencies. Research by Walmsley (2018) for the World Prison Brief highlighted that countries with inadequate record systems experienced higher rates of unlawful detention and were less able to implement evidence-based rehabilitation programming (Ivan et al., 2023).

In Uganda, the Uganda Prisons Service had initiated efforts to digitize inmate records under its modernization agenda, but implementation had been slow and uneven across the prison network. Mubiru (2019) evaluated the state of prison management in selected Ugandan prisons and found that the absence of computerized record systems was a major challenge, contributing to administrative delays and complicating the monitoring of inmate rehabilitation progress. The adoption of integrated management information systems was identified as a critical reform priority for improving administrative efficiency and human rights compliance across the Uganda Prisons Service.

Rehabilitation Programs and Reintegration

Rehabilitation programs in prisons encompassed a wide range of interventions including vocational skills training, formal education, psychological counseling, substance abuse treatment, and civic education (Kaazara & Audrey, 2025). Evidence from multiple countries indicated that well-implemented rehabilitation programs significantly reduced recidivism rates. MacKenzie (2006) reviewed meta-analyses of prison rehabilitation program evaluations and found that cognitive-behavioral therapy and vocational training programs were among the most effective in reducing reoffending behavior. In the East African context, Amnesty International (2016) documented the inadequacy of rehabilitation infrastructure in several Ugandan prisons, noting that overcrowding, limited budgets, and staff shortages severely constrained the ability of prison facilities to deliver meaningful rehabilitation programming.

Methodology

The study adopted a case study research design, which was appropriate for examining the management system of a single prison in depth. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed (Abiodun et al., 2022).

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Quantitative data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to 45 respondents comprising prison warders, administrative staff, and rehabilitation officers selected through purposive and simple random sampling. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 8 key informants including the Officer-in-Charge, the Head of Rehabilitation, the Prison Health Officer, and selected legal aid representatives. Secondary data were obtained from prison administrative records, annual reports, and policy documents. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25.0, with descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Results

Prison Capacity and Inmate Population

Table 1 presents data on the designed capacity and actual inmate population of Kauga Prison over a three-year period. The data revealed a consistent and severe overcrowding problem, with the inmate population exceeding designed capacity by over 100% in all three years. In 2022, the prison housed 436 inmates against a designed capacity of 200, representing an overcrowding rate of 218%. The proportion of remand (pre-trial) inmates was notably high, averaging 52.3% of the total inmate population across the three years, indicating significant delays in the judicial process as a major driver of prison population growth. This level of overcrowding placed enormous strain on the facility's physical infrastructure, healthcare services, and management staff, and was identified by key informants as the single most significant challenge facing the prison.

Table 1: Kauga Prison Capacity and Inmate Population (2020–2022)

Year	Designed Capacity	Actual Population	Overcrowding (%)	Remand Inmates (%)
2020	200	398	199%	54.5%
2021	200	412	206%	51.7%
2022	200	436	218%	50.7%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Assessment of Record-Keeping System

The survey results indicated that 82.2% of respondents rated the current manual record-keeping system as inadequate or very inadequate for efficient prison management. Specific problems identified included frequent errors in inmate personal details (reported by 71.1% of respondents), delays in updating inmate release dates (64.4%), difficulty retrieving historical case records (80.0%), and inability to generate management reports efficiently (75.6%). Key informants confirmed these findings, with the Officer-in-Charge noting that the manual system required excessive staff time for routine administrative tasks, diverting personnel from more critical security and rehabilitation functions. No digital record-keeping system was in use at the facility at the time of the study.

Table 2: Staff Ratings of Record-Keeping System Adequacy

Aspect of Record-Keeping	Inadequate/Very Inadequate (%)	Adequate/Very Adequate (%)
Accuracy of inmate personal records	71.1	28.9
Timeliness of sentence/release tracking	64.4	35.6
Ease of record retrieval	80.0	20.0
Management reporting capability	75.6	24.4
Overall system adequacy	82.2	17.8

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Rehabilitation Program Effectiveness and Reintegration Outcomes

Table 3 presents the regression analysis results examining predictors of successful inmate reintegration outcomes as assessed by prison rehabilitation staff. Administrative efficiency ($\beta = 0.421, p < 0.001$) and rehabilitation program quality ($\beta = 0.387, p < 0.001$) were the most significant positive predictors of reintegration success. Inmate participation rate in vocational programs ($\beta = 0.298, p < 0.01$) was also a significant predictor, indicating that higher levels of inmate engagement in skills training were associated with better reintegration outcomes. Overcrowding index, as expected, was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.312, p < 0.01$), confirming that higher levels of overcrowding undermined the prison's ability to deliver effective rehabilitation programming and prepare inmates for successful reintegration.

Table 3: Regression Analysis – Predictors of Reintegration Success

Predictor Variable	B	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Administrative Efficiency	0.448	0.421	5.12	0.000***
Rehabilitation Program Quality	0.398	0.387	4.76	0.000***
Vocational Training Participation	0.312	0.298	3.51	0.001**
Overcrowding Index	-0.329	-0.312	-3.78	0.000**

$R^2 = 0.682$; *Adjusted R*² = 0.661; $F(4, 40) = 21.47$; $p < 0.001$

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Discussion Of Results

The findings of this study painted a sobering picture of the prison management system at Kauga Prison, revealing systemic challenges that significantly undermined the institution's capacity to fulfill its statutory mandate of safe custody, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The severe overcrowding documented at the facility reaching 218% of designed capacity by 2022—was consistent with national-level data from the Uganda Prisons Service, which indicated that overcrowding was a pervasive problem across the prison network. This overcrowding had cascading effects on all aspects of prison management, including healthcare delivery, security management, and the implementation of

rehabilitation programs. The high proportion of remand inmates, averaging over 52% of the total inmate population, highlighted the role of judicial delays as a key driver of overcrowding and underscored the need for criminal justice sector reforms beyond the prison system itself.

The finding that 82.2% of staff rated the record-keeping system as inadequate was alarming and corroborated the concerns raised in the broader literature about the risks associated with manual record management in prison institutions. The specific vulnerabilities identified including inaccuracies in inmate records, delays in tracking release dates, and difficulty retrieving historical case information were precisely the types of weaknesses that could give rise to unlawful detention and undermine the legal rights of inmates. This finding reinforced the arguments advanced by Mubiru (2019) and Walmsley (2018) for the adoption of integrated prison management information systems as a critical administrative reform priority.

The regression analysis provided compelling quantitative evidence that administrative efficiency and rehabilitation program quality were the most significant determinants of successful inmate reintegration. These findings aligned with the theoretical proposition of Correctional Management Theory, which held that the organizational effectiveness of a prison was a prerequisite for the achievement of rehabilitation outcomes. The significant negative effect of overcrowding on reintegration outcomes was particularly noteworthy, as it quantified the extent to which prison population pressure undermined the very programs designed to reduce recidivism. This finding had direct implications for both prison policy and criminal justice reform, suggesting that efforts to reduce pre-trial detention and introduce non-custodial sentencing alternatives could have substantial benefits for rehabilitation effectiveness.

Conclusions

This study concluded that the prison management system at Kauga Prison was significantly challenged by overcrowding, inadequate record-keeping infrastructure, limited rehabilitation resources, and staffing shortfalls. These systemic deficiencies collectively undermined the prison's ability to manage inmates humanely, maintain accurate administrative records, and deliver effective rehabilitation programs. The empirical evidence confirmed that administrative efficiency and rehabilitation program quality were the most critical determinants of successful inmate reintegration, while overcrowding emerged as the single most significant barrier to effective prison management. The study further concluded that incremental administrative reforms, particularly the adoption of digital record management systems, combined with criminal justice sector interventions to reduce pre-trial detention periods, offered the most promising pathways to improving prison management outcomes at Kauga Prison.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the Uganda Prisons Service should prioritize the deployment of an integrated Prison Management Information System (PMIS) at Kauga Prison as a matter of urgency. Such a system should encompass digital inmate registration, case tracking, sentence monitoring, and rehabilitation program management functionalities.

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The system should be interfaced with the judiciary and the Uganda Police Force to facilitate real-time information sharing and reduce delays in case processing.

The Uganda Prisons Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were recommended to develop a comprehensive decongestion strategy for Kauga Prison that combined infrastructure expansion with criminal justice sector reforms, including the promotion of plea bargaining, the expanded use of community service sentences, and the expedited hearing of remand cases. Rehabilitation programs at the facility should be adequately funded and staffed, with a particular emphasis on evidence-based vocational skills training and cognitive-behavioral counseling approaches that had demonstrated effectiveness in reducing recidivism. The Uganda Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations were encouraged to strengthen their prison oversight functions to ensure that the management of Kauga Prison met national and international human rights standards.

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