

An Open-Secret of Male on Male Sexual Assault in Westville Correctional Center, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The focus on the perceptions of correctional service officials on sexual assault amongst the male offenders in Westville Correctional Center. The following were the objectives of the study: To explore awareness of male sexual assault between offenders among correctional service officials in Durban, Westville Correctional Center, South Africa; to explore the perceptions of correctional service officials towards male sexual assault between male offenders in Westville Correctional Center. The study employed a qualitative research approach to explore and describe the perceptions of officials; data was obtained through semi- structured interviews. The data was collected from a sample of 8 correctional service officials from medium A- D, by using a purposive sampling Technique. The collected data was transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis, which was used to develop themes that emerged. The findings depicted that correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center are aware of the occurrence of male sexual assault in their respective mediums through reported cases. The study also found correctional service officials view in correctional center it is possible for a male to be sexually assaulted and even though the correctional centers can implement strategies to curb male sexual assault, male offenders will always find an opportunity to commit this sexual offence.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the perceptions of the correctional service officials on male sexual assault in Durban Westville Correctional Center. This study was conducted to broaden and provide an understanding of male sexual assault inside correctional centers from the correctional services officials' perspective. This study seeks to provide a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge and address the gaps by focusing on the correctional officials' awareness of male sexual assault occurring in correctional center; and the perceptions of correctional service officials on male sexual assault and their reaction to male sexual assault in Durban Westville Correctional Center.

According to Gear (2010), South Africa has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the world and more attention has been focused on the devastating effect this has on females and children while males have been neglected, especially in correctional centers (Mezey and King, 2000; Booyens, 2008). The incidence of male sexual assault in correctional centers is a topic that has been considered with great fear and is largely ignored or considered a rare event. This occurrence makes it difficult for offenders who have been sexually assaulted to come forward and speak about their victimization (Policy to Address Sexual Abuse of Inmates in DCS Facilities, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial that the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) breaks this silence. This study will therefore help break the silence of male sexual assault through the perceptions of correctional services officials.

Males correctional centers "represent an extremely hierarchical, male dominated space where hegemonic masculinity flourishes through its control and command over other, subordinate masculinities" (Lewin, 2017:1). Consequently, sexual assault of males in correctional centers is regarded as a means of proclaiming one's manhood and exerting power over the weak. It is seen as an act of power rather than an act of sexual passion (Goyer & Gow, 2000; Booyens, 2008). Gear (2010) assert that in correctional centers it is understood that males are sexually assaulted as means to turn the victim into a 'woman' while confirming the masculinity of the perpetrator. The researcher shares the same sentiment with Gear (2010) as it was also found by this study that offenders are sexually assaulted as means to turn

the victims into girlfriends. The moment an offender enters the correctional center he may already be a target for sexual assault (Human Rights Watch, 2006). However, the characteristics that make the offender a high-risk target for sexual victimization are often out of the offender's control. The most vulnerable offender is described as "younger than perpetrators, physically weak or small, nervous in appearance, talkative, feminine or boyish, willing to accept favors, not prone to violence, having a history of mental health treatment, not being streetwise" (Cook & Lane 2017, Booyesen, 2008; Alberste, 2007). Male offenders within the correctional population with any one of these characteristics are likely to face an increasing risk of sexual assault. This study was conducted based on information mentioned by the authors above, to uncover if correctional service officials were aware of the offenders that were vulnerable to male sexual assault at Westville Correctional Center.

It is the absolute responsibility of the government to protect and prevent offenders from this sexual offence. Sexual assault in correctional centers, regardless of the perpetrator, represents a government's failure to uphold their responsibility (Just Detention International, 2009). It is one of the responsibilities of the South African correctional service officials to safeguard offenders and to make sure that they are protected from such incidents. However, Cook and Lane (2017), Cotton and Groth (1982), Eigenberg (2000) and Booyens (2008) stated that correctional officials may directly or indirectly contribute to sexual assault in correctional centers, either by means of encouraging the activity or by means of being silent. In addition, correctional service officials may be reluctant to acknowledge that offenders may fail to report incidents of sexual assault (Eigenberg, 2000). As a result, this attitude may lead officials to concentrate on other more "serious" problems where official estimates of violence are higher (Eigenberg, 2000).

Historically, the DCS remained silent or submitted to a sense of powerlessness to face such an uncomfortable issue. "DCS has also failed to share information about sexual assault in correctional centers and to ensure that all DCS staff receives the necessary training and guidance on how to prevent and respond to this sexual act in South Africa" (Policy to Address Sexual Abuse of Inmates in DCS Facilities, 2011:3). Consequently, the general public knows little, if not nothing, about male sexual assault in a correctional center (Booyens, 2008). This is an open-secret, general public speculate about the sexual assaults in correctional centers but when studies are conducted, members of the gangs conceal this information because it is a gang's rule amongst others, not to discuss the gang's activities. Subsequently the correctional officials turn blind eye to these molestations and to certain extent they facilitate this to happen. Therefore, this research seeks to share light on awareness amongst correctional officials of male on male sexual assault in correctional service in Durban, Westville Correctional Center, South Africa; and to explore the perceptions of correctional service officials towards male on male sexual assault in Durban, Westville Correctional Center.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF MALE SEXUAL ASSAULTS IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS

Examining the existing literature on male sexual assault in correctional centers, it is evident that offenders engage in both consensual and non-consensual or coerced sexual activity. The most common type of sexual interactions offenders engage in are coerced which is described as sexual assault (Martyniuk, 2014). Sexual assault in correctional centers is becoming common to the extent offenders simply accept it as way of life and part of the correctional facility process and culture (Ashmont, 2014). Sadly, the normalization of sexual assault in correctional centers by offenders and correctional service officials has made it seem as if sexual assault is necessary to be part of life in correctional centers and an accepted part of court-imposed punishment (Ashmont, 2014; Wyatt, 2006). This act of sexual violence in correctional settings is dangerous for staff as well as offenders, it undermines rehabilitation of offenders (Martyniuk 2014). Male sexual assault is more prevalent amongst males compared to females in correctional centers, where as in the general population it is more prevalent among females. While sexual assault is embedded in offender and gang culture, the way in which the culture normalizes this sexual offence simultaneously makes it invisible (Nel, 2017).

Male offenders tend to be more vulnerable to sexual assault in correctional centers compared to female offenders. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (2006) conducted a study to compare the sexual coercion experiences of male and female offenders in 10 Midwestern correctional centers. The study found that 21% of male offenders and 19% of female offenders reported having been pressured or forced to have sexual contact against their will (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2006). It is evident that male offenders are far more vulnerable to sexual assault when compared to female offenders, as the above statistics reveal that males are disproportionately vulnerable to sexual assault. These statistics reveal that there is an inordinate difference in sexual assault prevalence rates between males and female's offenders. Male offenders are more burdened by sexual assault than females, leading to the notion that male offenders are most vulnerable to sexual assault in correctional centers.

Male sexual assault in correctional centers is considered to be a reflection of a 'macho' society, which encourages men to strive for dominance and have control over others (Hellmann, 2005; Abdullah-Khan, 2008). Like sexual assault that is committed against women and children in the broader community; male sexual assault is also perceived as an act of power and violence rather than a sexual act within correctional centers (Jones & Schmid 1989; Pantazis, 1999; Scacco, 1982 as cited in Booyesen, 2008). In accordance to the above mentioned, Hellmann (2005:19) states that "sexual assault of men in correctional centers is a classic example of men using sexual assault as a means of experiencing themselves as powerful and in control over the victim". Thus, sexual assault may become a tool for attaining power in a powerless situation (Byrne & Humer, 2008).

According to Booyens (2008:28), "upon admission into the correctional center the new offender may be subjected to one of various forms of non-consensual sexual victimization, such as sexual harassment, sexual extortion and/or sexual assault. Sexual harassment comprises of a new offender being treated as a sexual object and often subjected to verbal abuse. Sexual coercion occurs when an offender must repay his debt (money, cigarettes etc.) to another offender by means of sex, due to a lack of resources." Within correctional centers experienced offenders' deceptive new admissions into sexual assault. To illustrate this point, Martynuik (2013) established in her paper that the more powerful offenders will offer 'gifts' (such as a candy bar or cigarettes) to lure the weaker offender into trusting him. Martynuik (2013), Cook and Lane (2017), Eigenberg (2000) and Alberst (2007) further stated that older offenders approach a new offender with offers of help, and perhaps protection from real or imagined threats from others. In accordance with a study by Booyesen (2008), it was found that one of the victims was sexually assaulted in the cell because he did not honor the transaction between himself and another offender. He was given food and cigarettes by another man in exchange for sex, but when he had to participate in the sexual act he did not want to and as a result he was sexually assaulted. In correctional centers, accepting gifts makes offenders vulnerable to male sexual assault because they are expected to pay back for those things sexually failure to do so result in sexual assault.

In agreement with the above study by Booyens (2008), Gear and Ngubeni (2002:17) found that, "assaults and threats of more sophisticated trickery and manipulation are prized instruments for subordinating new prisoners. For example, offers of friendship, protection, and dagga are used to lure new offenders and to begin a dependency dynamic in the interaction." They further found that the target is frequently unaware that an exchange is taking place and a debt being created for which he will later be expected to pay with sex.

2.2 THE CAUSES OF MALE INMATE SEXUAL ASSAULT IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS

Different factors have been identified as contributors to male sexual assault in correctional centers. Ignorance is one of the main contributors to male sexual assault in South African correctional centers (Booyesen & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Compounding this problem is the tendency of correctional service officials who neglect to report sexual violations that take place in their institutions once an individual has been incarcerated" (Booyesen & Bezuidenhout, 2014:03). This tends to prohibit offenders and victims of this crime to report on such incident. There are various factors that cause male on male sexual assault in correctional centers however, for the purpose of this paper, the researchers will discuss only two causes that ultimately stand out.

2.2.1 Overcrowding in Correctional centers

Hensley (2002) and Dumond (2003) points to the growing population in correctional center, overcrowding, and understaffing as the main culprits in the occurrence of sexual assault in correctional centers. Hensley (2002) suggested that overcrowding directly leads to violence and that sexual assault in correctional center is a ramification of overcrowded detention facilities. Additionally, Toch, Adams and Grant (1989) and Reid (1988) found that correctional centers operating above capacity exhibited more violence than correctional centers operating at or below capacity. The degree of overcrowding varies considerably from facility to facility and from province to province (Goyer & Gow, 2001:67).

Overcrowding is the single most pressing problem facing correctional services around the world and this generates a myriad of problems affecting offenders in great numbers. About 57% of all those incarcerated are in Sub-Saharan Africa, on average 160 per 100 000, compared to the global average rate of 145 per 100 000 (Scheibe, Brown, Duby, & Bekker, 2011: 51). According to the Draft White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2003:42), "South Africa has the world's highest correctional center population in relation to the actual population of the country." In South Africa 4 out of every 1 000 South Africans are incarcerated in a correctional center (Booyesen, 2008). Hence, this

causes overcrowding, and often leading to 50 to 70 offenders in a communal cell intended to accommodate only 18 offenders (Goyer & Gower, 2000:16).

The communal cells of Pollsmoor Correctional Center in Cape Town for example, have only one toilet and one shower per cell that houses fifty offenders, while 50% of the offenders are forced to share a bed or sleep on the floor (Booyens, 2008; Nel, 2017). The design of the communal cells in South African correctional centers may have an impact on the sexual assault of male offenders. To illustrate this point, Shayi (2008) states that overcrowding in correctional centers is perceived to be a contributing factor of male offenders seeking sexual gratification with other males. Correctional center overcrowding has negative effects on an offender's behavior, Barrett (2005) explains that overcrowding can lead to restlessness and frustration which may then lead to violence. In addition, Manganye (2016:29), state that "challenges presented by overcrowding can also have a profound impact on the quality of work performed by correctional service officials and the attitudes of the offenders." Significantly, it has become evident that overcrowding in correctional centers is a common phenomenon which result in some countless problems such as lack of safety, sexual assault, aggression, influence on stress tolerance and death from violence and ill-health (Manganye, 2016; Goyer & Gow, 2000). The Minister of Correctional Services, Ben Skosana, insisted that sexual assault can be associated with overcrowding of correctional centers (Ministry of Correctional Services, 2001).

Overcrowding in South African correctional facilities also has an impact on the extent of sexual assault including Durban Westville Correctional Center (Singh, 2007). Singh (2007) further mentions that overcrowding in correctional centers contribute to high risk of sexual behavior, violence, gang activity and corruption within the correctional center walls of Westville as reported by Correctional center officials. Goyer et al. (2001) mention that a former offender explained that in the crowded cells there are few beds than offenders in that cell and hence sharing a bed with another inmate can lead to sexual exploitation. Goyer et al (2001:127) argue that "the more crowded the correctional center is, the greater the likelihood is of the acts of sexual assault and homosexuality." There are several elements that contribute to factors which influence men's vulnerability to sexual assault in correctional facilities.

2.2.2 Gangsterism in Correctional Centers

South African correctional centers have been confronted with the problem of gangs and their violent manifestations for years. "Correctional center gangs are not exclusive to South Africa, but they are distinctive in South Africa because of their form of operation and due to the fact that they have a nation-wide organization" (Albertse, 2007:19). Their historic roots also make them distinctive and according to Haysom (1981:1), "these gangs are not spontaneous cliques banding together, but they have a structure and disciplinary code that pre-dates the South African Correctional Services."

Gangs in correctional centers were primarily formed as a means of self-protection from more offenders that are dominant and the authorities. This primary formation for protection has evolved to display power and resourcefulness in dealing with forbidden articles and commodities (Wood & Adler, 2001:169). "Each gang has its own vision, mission and aims and members are identified by distinct tattoos, with their own set of rules and a member will often be violently punished for contravening these rules" (Booyens, 2008:43). In addition, Draft White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2003:77) and Dissel (2002:10) postulated that gangs oversee correctional center life, and are responsible for smuggling, assaults, murder, distribution of food, escapes, intimidation, encouraging corruption amongst officials and forced sexual activity. In contrast to the above mentioned, Minnie et al., (2002:52) as cited in Booyens (2008:75) state that gangs serve a positive function in correctional centers as "they satisfy the physical, psychological and social needs of offenders, such as comradeship, status and protection." Several factors have contributed to the escalated rate of sexual assault that has seen male offender bear a disproportionate burden of sexual assault. Sabo et al. (2001:113) found that sexual assault is not an isolated event in correctional centers. It is part of a larger phenomenon: the hierarchical ranking of offenders by their fighting ability and manliness. If you are a male offender, you must either kill or turn the tables on anyone who propositions you with threats of force and violence (Albertse, 2007).

Albertse (2007:1) further asserts, "The gang culture in correctional centers has brought with it the disproportionate rise in male sexual assault, as gangs increasingly employ sexual assault as an initiation ritual of choice." In South Africa, gangs have long been part of the South African correctional centers for over hundred years. Gang violence, power structures and physical size also contribute to the extent of male sexual assault in correctional center (Dissel, 2002). The Just Detention International (JDI) (2009) reported that correctional center gangs have a huge role in perpetuating sexual violence in South African correctional facilities.

Booyens (2008) conducted a study on male sexual assault in Pollsmoor correctional center in Cape Town and found that gangs in the correctional center are responsible for forced sex (i.e. rape and sexual assault). This type of sex goes together with deception, as a young person or a new offender is given the tattoo of a gang, often with the promise that the gang will protect him (Booyens, 2008). He later finds out that he must have sex with a senior member of the gang because he has their gang number. If he does not comply, he is sexually assaulted (Booyens, 2008).

In the Durban Westville Correctional Center, gang activities are prevalent. Singh (2007) states that gang activity is alleged to be rife in Westville Correctional Center. She further mentions the five different kinds of gangs that exist in this correctional center which include; the 26's-responsible for robbery, assaults, stealing drugs; the 28's-responsible for sodomy; the big fives-responsible for spying for correctional service officials in order for their sentences to reduce and get foster parole; the air force-responsible for escapes (Singh, 2007). These gangs contribute to the extent of male sexual assault in the Durban-Westville Correctional Center; especially the 28's whom use sexual assault when recruiting and controlling victims (Singh, 2007). Parker and Lewis (2003:170) adds that "the 28's are famous for their use of coerced sex to create wives or sex slaves for the pleasure of designated males in the gang, by misleading the victim with supposed generosity and protection". Donaldson (2001) defines this type of relationship as protective pairing which is a form of prison sexual assault in which males protect the weaker offender in exchange for sex. In addition, some men enter a "marital" relationship for protection in order to avoid continual sexual assault by different perpetrators. In order to escape being abused by many men, the victim chooses to "pair off" with one partner who can protect him against sexual abuse from others. Since these inmates are "voluntarily" exchanging sex for protection, many correctional service officials fail to see the hidden coercion that lies within this relationship (Harvey, 2002; Trammell, 2011). Male victims usually do not report this behavior because of the offender code of silence (Kupers, 2001). Furthermore, these relationships are constructed in a way the man holds all the power and the victim is used for sex (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004). Britton (2003) argue that incarcerated males creates gangs and use physical violence to control each other. "Many of the occupants of these positions have been coerced into their roles, and unsurprisingly then, tend to be drawn from a pool of people who are vulnerable within the prison environment. Importantly, vulnerability to being made into a wife appears to be reasonable with vulnerability to unwanted sex in general, much of the time it is those who are coerced into an initial sex act who are consequently taken as wives for the longer term. A range of factors structure this form of vulnerability within the prison context" (Gear and Ngubane, 2002:17). Consequently, some correctional service officials and offenders may perceive these marriages or relationships as consensual, but such relationships are in fact a form of sexual assault.

2.3 THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OFFICIALS IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS

The Correctional Services Amendment Act (No.32 of 2001: 10) defines a correctional services official "as any employee appointed by the Department of Correctional Services in South Africa under section 3(4) of the Act." The correctional services official is the most significant individuals in the life of the offender (Manganye, 2016). According to Grieneder (2013:24) cited in Manganye (2016:8), "correctional service officials are trained in two separate methods that fluctuate between punitive and promoting rehabilitation. They are expected to make sure that security is maintained and at the same time be in a position to be responsible for changing behavior of inmates constructively." "A correctional service official needs to exemplify the values of the Department as he/she will be the one to facilitate the rehabilitation process of offenders and also have an attitude of serving with quality, a principled way of relating to others and above all a just and caring attitude" (White Paper on Corrections, 2005:111).

Empirical evidence suggests that correctional service officials stress both treatment and custody functions of a correctional center, with corruption of authority, and contemplate social distance in their relationships with offender. They show concern over the ability of offender to corrupt their authority and their own ability to maintain enough social distance between themselves and offenders. Officials, however, may have some misperceptions about the punitive or custody orientations of their fellow officials.

The relationship between the official and the offenders is the key towards correction and rehabilitation, as well as to the management of corrections" (White Paper on Corrections, 2005:54). "If there is a good staff-inmates' relations especially with first line corrections officer's rehabilitative efforts will be perceived as sincere and as a goal of correctional facilities. In order to strengthen these relations, officials should be trained on interpersonal relations and conflict management "(Patrick & Marsh, 2008: 60). Correctional service officials must ensure that all offenders are safe, however male offenders get sexually assaulted at the hands of these officials. It is essential to explore the perceptions of correctional service officials on male sexual assault as this crime occurs under their watch.

3. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used an exploratory design for this study. Burns and Groove (2001:374) define exploratory research “as research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon.” Bless et al. (2013), Zikmund (2003) and Cooper and Schinder (2006) allude that exploratory research is used when there is little research about a particular subject, and it is used primarily by researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena. The exploratory design for this study helped the researchers to collect the qualitative data in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center on male sexual assault. Although various research has been conducted on male sexual assault in correctional facilities, little is known about the correctional officials’ opinion/views (Eigenberg, 2000b; Booyens, 2008). Little attention has been paid to study correctional official perceptions in Westville Durban hence the undertaken study was carried out.

The study employs a qualitative research approach that assisted the researchers to gather depth of understanding on the perceptions of correctional official’s concerning the eventuation of sexual assaults amongst inmates in the Westville Correctional Center. The aim of this study is to explore correctional official’s views towards male sexual assaults, and a qualitative research method is thus particularly relevant for studying the lived, everyday realities of correctional officers’ beliefs and perceptions of male sexual assault, particularly in Westville Correctional Center.

3.1 Sampling

The participants were selected according to a purposive sampling. According to Patton and Michael (2002:34), “purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest.” The researcher purposefully selected the sample for this study based on the nature of the study objectives and research questions. Therefore, eight (8) participants were selected; with (02) officials from each medium. The researchers remained with this diminutive number of a sample because many participants refused to take part in the study and some of those who agreed to take part, decline during the process of collecting data due to sensitiveness of the study and others claimed to be busy. Those participants who agreed to take part in the study had enough experienced as a correctional official from Westville Correctional Center. The sample provided rich and thick information that answered the objectives of this study.

3.2 Data collection

Data collection for this study was based on key informant interviews (KIIs) in which semi-structured interviews were conducted on an individual basis. It combined a set of pre-determined questions that enabled the interviewer to explore further particular themes and responses. The semi-structured interview was appropriate for this study because it allowed for a free and open dialogue with the interviewees (correctional services officials) and provided a unique opportunity to acquire in-depth information about the perceptions of correctional service officials on male sexual assault in Westville Correctional Center. This allowed for a great degree of flexibility and prompted participants to speak on issues that were relevant to this research. This ensured that participants in this research were given the opportunity to express themselves in their own words on their perceptions of male sexual assault in correctional facilities. Semi-structured interviews also provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006:168). Individual interview session ranged between 45 minutes to an hour, depending on how much information given by the participant and interview ended with each participant given the opportunity to ask any question he/she might have. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder; participants consent was requested to audio record the interviews. Audio recording allowed the researcher to capture all the essential information that was relevant to this study. Once all the information was recorded, the researcher transcribed the completed interviews.

3.3 Data analysis

Data in this study was generated through the semi-structured interview schedule, and this was presented in terms of a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis has six steps which the researchers followed to analysis collected data. Once the informant interviews (KIIs) were completed the researchers took 4 days to just listen to the interview’s recordings, listening carefully to what the participants were saying. The researchers listened to the voice recordings while writing down word-for-word, and later translating and transcribing them. This was done 2-4 day after interviews to allow the researchers to recall any relevant information that was of relevance to the study. This step also included reading and re-reading the data, to ensure that the researchers was familiar with the data. During the second phase out of the raw data the researchers code the data, this was done by underlining interesting features that were relevant to the research questions of this study. The researchers then identified relevant themes to this study. According to Mbewe (2017), this

is searching for themes entailed, identifying recurrent patterns of responses from the participants. The fifth step involved reviewing, defining and naming themes and reducing them to meaningful themes. Thereafter, the researchers analyzed the data under the identified themes to present and discuss the findings of the data in an understandable way.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To conceal the identity of the participant the researcher assigned pseudonym in the following way, the number 01 represent males, 02 will females and the alphabet A- D will represent the different mediums. For example, A01 A02, B01 B02, C01 C02 and D01 D02.

Table 1, below depicts the biographical data of correctional service officials in Westville Correctional Center. The study comprises of 4 males and 4 females who have between 06 to 33 years of experiences. Five of these participants are Africans, two of them are Afrikaner and one Indian. The researchers sampled 2 (male and female) participants from medium A, B.C and D.

Table1: Biographical data of correctional service officials in Westville Correctional Center

Participants	Race	Gender	Experience
Medium A-A01	Afrikaner	Male	27
Medium A-02	African	Female	06
Medium B-01	Afrikaner	Male	32
Medium B-02	African	Female	15
Medium C-01	African	Male	24
Medium C-02	African	Female	18
Medium D-01	Indian	Male	33
Medium D-02	African	Female	06

Source: Mthethwa and Sibanyoni (2019)

To ensure authenticity, the participants' comments are presented verbatim. The researcher did not alter any participants' responses. Any language inaccuracies therefore remained unedited.

4.1 CORRECTIONAL OFFICIAL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM 'SEXUAL ASSAULT'

Learning how correctional service officials comprehend sexual assault in a correctional center is essential because they cannot react appropriately if they fail to understand what constitute a sexual act as sexual assault. In addition, they will be unable to monitor and prevent it effectively. Their definition of the situation leads them to see behavior as consensual or coercive sexual activity (Eigenberg, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to unearth how correctional service officials define the term sexual assault.

The findings of this study show that correctional service officials are not liberal in their understanding of sexual assault. The assumption could be that sodomy is a term that is commonly used in correctional centers to refer to sexual relations between male offenders, whether consensual or coercive. This is evident in the following excerpts, which captures the verbatim expressed by the participants to divulge their own understanding of what sexual assault means:

"It's like sexual, it's like sexual assault. Like sex" (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

"I would say, it occurs when someone's private parts are being touched without their permission or direct penetration" (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

"From my understating it starts from harassment and ends with sodomy" (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

"It's to be victimized sexually ... it's when a man has sleeps with another man by force without the consent it can also be oral however that rare here" (Participant, Medium D, Female) [sic].

"In the correctional centers what we know it happen mostly in two ways, it happens with the forced penetration in the anus or it happen with the thighs. Mostly concerning the forced penetration between the tights from what we understand although these guys are gangsters, they are also cautious of HIV and those things but I suppose sexual assault can be so many things. I mean but if you ask me specifically about sex and sexual assault those are the two ways" (Participant 4, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“I would say that it similar to rape because there is no agreement involved between the two people. A person takes a chance on new and mentality disturbed offenders” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

“Ay like said as old as I am with years of experience that I have I can’t really tell you exactly happens to qualify the act as sexual assault but when a person reports he explains what really happened. So maybe I would be speaking about something I do not know maybe it when victims refuse to have something with the perpetrator, but the perpetrator do it against the victims will” (Participant, Medium C, Male) [sic].

“Well though I don’t have... thing is I can’t differentiate between rape and sexual assault if it is the same thing am not sure but I believe that they take a person and penetrate behind because their males without his consent” (Participant, Medium C, Female) [sic].

From the above verbatim, correctional service officials defined male sexual assault as harassment; sodomy and a sexual offence that is like rape because there is no consent involved, coercive anal and thigh penetration; touching of private parts without consent. However, one participant alludes that with his years of experience he still did not have knowledge of what sexual assault was, until the victim explained what happened. One of the participants reveal the challenge of differentiating between rape and sexual assault. In addition, one participant understood the term to be having the same meaning as sodomy. From the above data it is evident that the participant had a basic idea of what sexual assault means. However, there is a remaining proportion of correctional officials who are not able to appropriately define the term.

Officials who lack a clear understanding of sexual assault make it impossible for them to provide safety and security for offenders who are at an increased risk of sexual assault. Correctional service officials working within correctional centers are situated to have unique understanding about the context of sexual assault (Cook & Lane, 2017). However, the study data shows that correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center had a basic knowledge of the term, though they did not have a uniform definition of sexual assault. Thompson et al. (2008), as cited in Rodriguez (2011:19), argue that there is a need to educate correctional service officials of a uniform definition of sexual victimization with the context of an institution. Uniform understating of sexual assault in correctional centers will provide officials with a clear understanding of what sexual assault is and prevent officials from having their own definitions of what sexual assault is.

The above discussion revealed that the participants had a basic idea of the term sexual assault. Having obtained the meaning of sexual assault from the correctional official’s perspective, it is also important to uncover their awareness of the existence of male sexual assault.

4.2 CORRECTIONAL OFFICIALS’ AWARENESS OF THE EXISTENCE AND PREVALENT OF MALE SEXUAL ASSAULT

Correctional centers are regarded as high-risk settings for sexual assault of offenders (Wyatt, 2006). Therefore, it is of great importance that correctional service officials are aware about these occurrences so that they can provide the appropriate safety measures for the offenders. Correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center were aware of the existence of male sexual assault in their mediums. Consequently, when asked **“Do you believe that male sexual assault happens here in your medium?”** participants were able to answer the question substantially on the occurrences of male sexual assault in their respective mediums. The following is the verbatim expressed by the participants to depict their awareness of the existence and prevalent of male sexual assault in Westville Correctional Center:

“Yes, yes it happens, yeah because there are inmates that do report incidents. There have been inmates that have reported incidents like that were there have been you know” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

“From time to time, I have had offender come up to me to report. What happens is that when it come to our attention offenders are referred to hospital, they go to outside hospital to Addington hospital for a rape examination and ... to be done. But it happens... I can’t even say once a month it happens maybe 2 or 3 times in a correctional center like this in a year” (Participant, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“Yes, it does happen, we have had cases reported by those who were sexually assaulted ... Not so long ago a mentally ill guy was sexually assaulted in the hospital section of this medium” (Participant, Medium C, Male) [sic].

“Yes, it happens, we get cases like those. It very rare but it happens, maybe in a year we have 10% of reported cases” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

“I agree because there are complaints that we receive from inmates, saying that something of this nature has happened” (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

From the above verbatim it is evident that male sexual assault exists, and penetration is prevalent. These findings highlight that the most common form of male sexual assault in correctional center is coercive anal penetration. Participants reported that offenders report their sexual victimization all the time. They reported that sexual assault is committed to victims that are mentally disturbed and is happening during the night. Even though participants were not sure of the statistics of male sexual assault, from the above verbatim it is evident that male offenders from Westville Correctional Center are exposed to male sexual assault and its occurrence cannot be limited to a week or a month. Participants also expressed that though they have not physically witnessed the incident of male sexual assault, they were aware that it was happening because of reported cases. Also, victims of sexual assault are taken to hospital for an examination. Correctional officers from Westville Correctional Center were aware of the existence of male sexual assault in their respective mediums, this therefore led to their awareness of the tactics used by perpetrators of sexual assault in correctional center.

4.2.1 The impact of the structural designs of communal cells on male sexual assault

According to the participants, the design of the correctional center has an impact on male sexual assault. While permitting privacy for the offenders and reducing noise within the medium, the cell solid steel door (patrolling doors) may also provide the degree of privacy that permit sexual assault to occur (Kaufman, 2008). Participants explained that the solid steel door limits their visual observation when patrolling, because when looking inside the cell through a small window, they are not able to observe all four corners of the cell. The assumption is that male sexual assault can take place in the corners that officials cannot see. Participants reported that because of the solid doors of the cells, they are not able to patrol effectively at night. This is expressed in the following verbatim:

“As you know, I mean once an inmate is locked up, it’s beyond us now you understand, we are only there during the day to see I mean what happens. Beyond that ... because you must see these prisons have been designed in a communal holding cell, because of the design it difficult for us now to see what happens in the cells especially at night because we only look through a small window” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

“You have got big communal cells with 50 /55 or 60 people in it, the night shift member comes up the steps he looks into the cell, and he got a little window this big to look into. You cannot see all corners of the cell, you have got beds that 3 or 4 beds on top of each other, so now this also contribute to sexual assault” (Participant, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“Once we lock up we don’t see what goes on in cells which is why it’s difficult to know the truth but it clear that there are other factors that come into play beyond what we know” (Participant, Medium C, Male) [sic].

“Ay I don’t have much to say, we can also do our level best to deal with male sexual assault but because the structure of the cells what happens in them is beyond our control, since we don’t have a full view of the cell also we don’t have easy control to the master key. Getting the key is not something that can happen fast which is why you get that by the time we open the assault has already taken place” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

“The guard cannot see everything because it’s very easily, it is not like in a rape movie where a person will shout and scream, and it’s not like that. Even if I look through the window, I won’t even see it. The act may be taking place but I won’t even see it because it will be under the sheet, so you won’t even see it” (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

“The cell has a steel door with a little window we use to look inside the cell, offenders use the sides of the cell we cannot see to sexually assault other offenders” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

“These prisons are designed big dormitories where like you get between 30 and 40 inmates in there so it beyond us now once it locked up there, I mean for ... curb this thing it impossible you understand with the design of the building” (Participant, Medium C, Female) [sic].

Participants reported that having 50 to 60 offenders in one cell and unable to see clearly inside the cell contribute to male sexual assault. In addition, participants reveal that at night it is not easy to open the cell door, as a result by the time the cell is opened the incident might have already occurred. Participants further stated that what happens inside the cells is beyond their control because of the way in which cells are designed, even when they could be looking

through the window on the door, the act may be taking place, but they will not see it. This is because when looking through the window of the door, the officials are unable to view all four corners of the cell. Therefore offender's use the corners that officials cannot see to commit sexual assault or the act maybe happening under the sheet. One participant mentioned that due to the structural design of the cells it is difficult to curb male sexual assault. The findings of this study suggest that participants comprehend that although the solid steel door may act as a security mechanism in the correctional center, it also contributes to male sexual assault because officials are not able to patrol effectively. This finding suggests the solid steel door hinders correctional service officials to manage efficiently male sexual assault in correctional center.

4.2.2 The darkest night produces victims of sexual assault

According to participants, most of the sexual assault occurs at night. The assumption is that the center is under-staffed. Correctional service officials are not allowed to enter the cell without permission of the Head of the Center. Accessing the master key for correctional service officials at night is not easy because the key is kept at the arsenal (this refers to place where all the security equipment is kept). Consequently, participants articulated that it sometimes results in them entering the cell when the incident has also occurred. The study findings demonstrate that participants were aware of the time of the sexual assault and therefore should be more vigilant at this time. However, because of issues such as being under-staffed with only half the officials working at night, correctional service officials are compromised. This is further discussed in the following excerpt, verbatim:

“yes, because it's at night we don't have keys and some of them, even if it has happening during the night it is not that they are not calling the guards to come and assist” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

The researchers probed the participant concerning the sexual assault taking place mostly at night. The following are reasons for sexual assault to take place at night and the comments were expressed in the following verbatim:

“Most probably it's the safest time for them, because it's not that they would do this assault while everybody is awake too. Maybe it would be 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning while everyone is sleeping, one man would just climb to another man's bed and he would the thing. Like now nobody would do it now. They'd rather do it later because now there's more man, everyone's awake and somebody would see them but at night everything quiet although there is a guards he might not see because will be under the sheet, so you won't even see it” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

“We lock them up at night and anything can happen at night you see most of these offences happen during the night as I said very rarely it happens during the day it only happens during the day of the offenders are unguarded” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

“In our correctional center we have 50 – 60 in a cell it tough and you normally don't think a sexual assault can happen in a cell with 50 offenders, if its 1am in the morning and the 49 is sleeping and the one quietly get into bed with the other it can happen. You don't even need to be very vocal and very loud it will happen while people are sleeping... we have heard it before that offenders don't even do it in the cells because in the cells, they know that there will get reported. During the day they will find a little corner somewhere in the medium for literately 1 or 2 min where they have intercourse, I promise you” (Participant, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“And those who do it, I think they do it by chance, especially at night when everyone in in their deep sleep” (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

“In this medium am always dealing with cases of male sexual assault, offenders come to me and report that they were sexually assaulted at night, and couldn't report because so and so was threatening me. It happens at night when everyone is sleeping” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

“Also for us it had to see offenders in the act because this happens at night when we have locked them up in the cells and it is not easy for us to get inside the cells” (Participant, Medium C, Female) [sic].

It is evident from the participants that sexual assault usually occurs during the night and early hours of the morning (i.e. 2 to 3am). They attest that sexual assault is rarely occurring during the day because there are witnesses. Participants further reveal that most sexual assault cases reported to them occurred during the night. The reason being at night a victim fears for his life. In addition, participants reported that perpetrators commit male sexual assault at night because it is the safest time for them with most offenders asleep. Two participants further reported that at night offenders are not vocal when engaging in the act.

These findings confirm the widely acknowledged notion that male sexual assault in correctional centers occurs at night, encompassed by the lack of guardianship (Wolff et al., 2006; Booyens & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Hensley, Koscheski & Tewksbury, 2005). The data suggest that participants are aware that male sexual assault occurs at night because they are short-staffed. Also, at this time patrolling doors come into play. Because it is at night when offenders are locked inside the cells, with only half of the officials working and have limited or obstructed view into cell. Booyes (2008) although the content of her study was different to the current study because she was looking at the sexual assault and rape of male offenders and awaiting-trial detainees our findings are similar that the time of sexual assault is at night. Correctional center is compromised at night because of issues such as being understaffed. The following discussion in on the understaffing of correctional center as a contributing factor to male sexual assault.

4.2.3 Understaffing as a contributing factor to sexual assault in Westville correctional center

In terms of awareness of male sexual assault in correctional center, some participants were of the view that the correctional center is inadequately staffed, and sexual assault occurs because correctional service officials are simply not. The findings confirm that offenders are often left alone, especially at night as a result of understaffing. Therefore, resulting in male sexual assault of offenders.

The following verbatim reveal how being short- staffed in correctional center impact male sexual assault:

“We have a night shift member that patrols a double wing, there is two hundred and fifty offenders inside. Even if it happens, they are unlikely to inform us. Being short-staffed in a correctional center like this plays a huge role in male sexual assault and because we are short-staffed, we are regularly compromised at night which is when we should be more vigilant in regards to that” (Participant, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“Factors such as shortage of staff makes it difficult for us to prevent this from happening” (Participant, Medium D, Female) [sic].

“We under – staffed ... you find that one guard patrols the cells randomly looking from one cell to other. I mean he has 8 cells to look his not going to look at one cell for the whole shift during the duration of the shift, he moves from one spot to another so when he moves it can happen when his not looking in that cell” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

It is evident from the participants that being short-staffed in a correctional center plays a huge role in the occurrences of male sexual assault. Participants revealed that factors such as shortage of staff make it challenging to prevent male sexual assault. In addition, participants reported that 1 correctional service official has eight cells to patrol. During the duration of the shift he moves from one wing of the cells to another, therefore when he moves, he leaves one wing unattended. Participants expressed that as a concern because the center is short-staffed at night, of which that when there should be more officials to be vigilant of any act such as sexual assault.

Offender have been trusted in the care of correctional service officials to protect them and safeguard from occurrences of male sexual assault. However, officials are failing to adhere to this responsibility because of being under-staffed especially at night when the occurrence of male sexual assault is likely to occur. The center has only one correctional official that is responsible for more than 250 offenders, therefore this highlights the challenges correctional service officials are currently facing in correctional center. It was interesting to find out that the shortage of staff in a correctional center play a significant role on male sexual assault.

Short-staffed correctional centers have proven to have an impact on male sexual assault, because officials are unable to adequately supervise offenders, this is commonly due to overcrowding.

4.3 PERCEPTION OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OFFICIALS ON MALE SEXUAL ASSAULT

Understanding the perceptions and attitudes of correctional service officials on male sexual assault may be key to uncover how officials manage and respond to sexual assault in correctional center. The researchers posed a question about the participant’s view on male sexual assault in order to shed light on the broader context of this study. In terms of perceptions of correctional service officials on male sexual assault, participants believed there will always be an opportunity for male sexual assault to take place in correctional facility. Officials perceive that nothing can be done – they said, “if it is going happen, it will happen.” They articulated that if gangsterism exists in correctional centers, male sexual assault is always going to be there. In addition, they were of view that offenders are at risk of HIV transmission. Male sexual assault is perceived as an act that affect life of offenders in correctional centers. This was expressed by the participant in the following verbatim:

“Mmmhh, it is a concern but I don’t think it’s such a major concern because it doesn’t really happen so much. But it does happen, if it happens steps are being taken, maybe on another factor also, from the health side of it. they are providing the people with condoms ... now if there’s 20 in a cell and an incident happens, out of that 20 maybe 15 belong to a gang now they are going to turn a blind eye but the other persons that are not in the gang turn a blind eye so there is nothing we can do. if it’s going to happen, it will happen” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

“I’m mainly concerned about sexually transmitted diseases they may get because of this. I also know for the fact that this may have a negative impact on someone’s psychological well-being. Even I would get sexually assaulted I know it would have an impact on me psychologically” (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

“Yes, yes I am. You see it something that shouldn’t happen at all if you take this a is specifically a maximum-security center ... There is always going to be an opportunity for it happen, the bottom line being if they want to have it they going to have it. It something that you can minimize but you can’t stop it all together ... you know some of those guys that become wives to some offenders, it’s a form of survival. It’s a form of keeping yourself alive and keeping yourself out of trouble because the nice thing of having a ‘husband’ you have got protection. (Participant, Medium B, Male) [sic].

“How can I not be, as a mother and as a parent because when offenders arrive here there our kids. How can I not be worried that when offenders come into correctional center their get assaulted sexually because I know that it is done against a person’s will with no protection used. Therefore, offenders are at risk of getting HIV through sexual assault. My worry is also that as you can see even on the outside now we have this thing of gays and lesbians, most of these things start here in correctional center. A person practices these things inside here and sleep with the same gender when he goes back in the communities, he uses that, this ends up affecting the community far beyond” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

I am very concerned about this as I have said that as we are here our aim is to guard and protect the offenders, the incarcerated offender has to be here and be safe up until he is released so if we get report of male sexual assault it means that our job fully done” (Participant, Medium C, Male) [sic].

“I am concerned who wouldn’t be, these people are under our care so it our responsibility to protect them from such and personally I think that for this to even happen to them it shows that we are not doing our job effectively. Offenders in correctional centers also have right, also we must be concerned because this really messes up the victim. So, this challenge we are facing, the department of correctional services has to try and come up with more effective ways to deal with this” (Participant, Medium C, Female) [sic].

“Yes, it’s worrying because you find that the perpetrator has HIV and therefore transmit the virus to the victim. Also, it’s my job to prevent such from happening, offender should not be victimized in anyway while still incarcerated” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

“Yes, I am because some of the offenders get assaulted without the use of condoms” (Participant, Medium D, Female) [sic].

From the verbatim above, participants depicted that sexual assault contributes to STIs and HIV. They allude that offenders allow this to happen to them due to seeking a sense of belonging and a sense of security. Distribution of condoms makes the matter worse as it encourages the problem to escalate rather than curbed. Sexual assault contributes to psychological effect to the victim. Participants reported that it is their job to ensure the safe custody of offender, therefore offender should not be sexually assaulted while still incarcerated. Two participants allude that failure to protect offenders against male sexual assault while incarcerated indicates that they are not doing their job efficiently as correctional services officials. Participants are of the view that the issue of gays and lesbians begins in correctional centers, when a person is released back into the community he or she continues with this behavior. One participant alludes that offenders in maximum security (Medium B) are convicted offenders in an overcrowded center, surrounded by convicted criminals all different crimes including sexual assault of men in the community. As a result, male sexual assault is likely to occur in such environments. He further added that there is no way of hiding perpetrators of sexual assault, they cannot be excluded from the correctional population. One participant reported that as long as something is part of the modus operandi of a gang it will also be present in a correctional center i.e. the 28-gang modus operandi is to sleep with other males.

Ashmont (2014) conducted a study on raped by the system: a comparison of prison rape in the United States and South Africa, our findings are similar that male sexual assault has been normalized as part of life in correctional center. Some of the participants in this study admitted to male sexual assault to be prison culture.

“It an old culture of correctional centers that doesn’t want to end” (Participant, Medium C, Male).

“Listen like am saying this from the time I joined this department till to date it has, it’s like culture, and it’s like prison culture it’s always been there. So, it’s like a norm you know” (Participant, Medium A, Male).

These two participants are of the opinion that sexual assault in correctional centers has been normalized and regarded as a culture. Male sexual assault in correctional centers is something that won’t end.

The following discussion pertains to the distribution of condoms in correctional center.

4.3.1 Promotion of sexual behaviors in correctional centers

When asked about the views of condom use in correctional center, participants had a difference of opinions about distribution of condoms in correctional center. Some participants expressed that due to the wide spread of sexual assault, condom use would reduce the risk of HIV transmission, while others felt that the use of condoms in a correctional center promotes coercive sexual relations because most sexual acts in correctional centers are coercive. In a study conducted by Yap et al. (2006) it was found that 4% of males in correctional centers believed that condom provision was unacceptable on the grounds that it would lead to an increase in sexual activity among offenders. Contrary to the above study, Butler et al. (2013) found that providing offenders with condoms is not associated with an increase in consensual or non-consensual sexual activity, or even threats of sexual assault. This finding shows that condom distribution in Westville Correctional Center remains controversial amongst correctional services officials. This is evident in the following verbatim:

“There are condoms in all the sections of the medium” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

“There is not much that we can do but the hospital provides condoms, for if it happens people will be safe from infectious diseases, secondly what we do during orientation we teach offenders on how to behave. Proving offender with condoms mean that we are aware that there are offenders who have sexual relations here, even on the outside there are gays that practice these things to be safe” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

“The government must continue providing correctional centers with condoms because male sexual is happening at least offenders can be protected from sexual transmission diseases” (Participant, Medium D, Female) [sic].

“Look now the department comes in, the health medical department comes in and issues condoms for inmates so now what are you promoting? Every section comes in there have got a box there where they come and hand in condoms, their come in a put ton of condoms in there every unit that you go into, there give them condoms why? what are you promoting? What are you trying to say? the department; the government... the health department comes in here and brings in condoms, there issues tons of condoms to inmates, what is the use of condoms in a male facility? Are you implying that males should sleep with each other? The distribution of condoms in male facilities can promote sexual relationships among males which can be both consensual and forced. Like look now if I give you a condom, what does it mean? Practice safe sex, what now the department is now forgetting is that most of the sex that happens here forced” (Participant, Medium A, Male) [sic].

“... that just the thing it’s a bet because if this thing happening and maybe it happens to you, would you rather have it happening with a condom or without a condom? So if you provide a condom, then a person will turn around and say you are enhancing for it to happen and if you don’t provide a condom people can turn around and say now I’m a victim. I got HIV, so what do you do?” (Participant, Medium A, Female) [sic].

Participants reported that male offenders were provided with condoms, and therefore perceived them necessary for perpetrators and victims of male sexual assault to be protected against sexually transmitted diseases. The distribution of condoms means that they are aware that offender engage in sexual interactions. The supply of condoms in a correctional center enhances and implies male sexual assault. However, most of the sexual interactions in correctional centers are coercive. These findings suggest that there remain debatable opinions on the use of condoms in correctional centers (Butler et al., 2013). Thus, it can be argued that most participants perceived condoms as necessary in correctional centers for perpetrators and victim of sexual assault to reduce HIV transmission. However, some participants were of the view that the distribution of condoms is enhancing male sexual assault as most of the sexual interaction in correctional center are coercive.

In South African correctional centers different kinds of sexual interactions and relationships occur between victims and perpetrators of sexual offence. Most of these sexual interactions are abusive, exploitative, involves rape and various degrees of coercion (Dolan et al., 2007). However, offenders are provided with condoms. It can be argued that the distribution of condoms in correctional center is aiding male sexual assault, the assumption is that offender can sexually assault male offenders and be safe from HIV transmission in the process. The actual context of HIV commutation suggests that amongst people who do not use condoms (Dolan et al., 2007). In the general community where people consent to sexual interaction, there are still high infection rates of HIV due to the inability to use available HIV prevention methods i.e. condoms. Therefore, male sexual assault can continue to occur with or without the distribution of condoms in correctional centers. In communities it is common that males do not use condoms constantly, before an offender is incarcerated, he is a member of a community. Thus, failure to use a condom constantly in the general community can equally result to inconstancy of condom use in correctional center.

From the discussion above participants understood the seriousness of male sexual assault in correctional centers. They held different views on the distribution of condoms in correctional center. The following discussion is on the comfortability of offenders in correctional center.

4.3.2 Comfortability of offenders in Correctional centers

Contrary to the assumption that male sexual assault is caused by gangs, overcrowding, under-staffed correctional centers and corruption of officials, it was interesting to note that comfortability of offenders in correctional centers play an immense role on sexual assault.

The participants expressed this notion in the following:

“Others have got no future on the outside there have been rejected by their families, so in order to survive in jail this is how there survive. A person does another crime so that there can be sentenced longer so that they can continue to stay in correctional center. Some people are comfortable here, you see those who sleep in the street. especially in weather we receive a lot of offenders because they know that in winter the street is cold, they come into the prison. others even say that it’s better to be in jail because you have three meals a day, a bed, a tv rather than outside There are struggling outside so they will decide to come into the prison in order to have a comfort life” (Participant, Medium B, Female) [sic].

“Offenders don’t care because you have nothing to look forward to outside of the correctional center, therefore some of them end up committing male sexual assault so that they can stay longer inside because they know that they have food, place to sleep and warm water” (Participant, Medium D, Male) [sic].

The above data suggest that offenders who have nothing to look forward to after imprisonment are potential perpetrators of sexual assault. Participants reported that offenders are comfortable in correctional centers because they receive three meals a day, warm water, bed and T.V. As a result, participants allude that offenders commit other offences i.e. sexual assault to prolong their sentences. In a study conducted by Laub and Sampson (2003) on persistent offenders, it was found that some long-term offenders perceived life in correctional center being easier than life on the street. Akstron (1985:23) reported similar findings, “many participants in the study reported that the idea of living a conventional life was more terrifying than doing time.” This is an interesting point for future research as participant raised this point which was not anticipated by the researchers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the perceptions of correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center on sexual assault of male offenders. This study employed the qualitative approach. The study participants were able to provide detailed views on male sexual assault. The findings of this study were obtained by means of semi-structured interviews from eight correctional service officials from medium A to D of the Westville Correctional Center which were sampled using purposive sampling. This study found that correctional service officials from Westville Correctional Center are aware of the occurrence of male sexual assault in their respective mediums. Correctional service officials have an immense amount of knowledge on male sexual assault i.e. types of vulnerable victims; methods used to lure victims; and effect of understaffing on male sexual assault. Furthermore, the study found that the perceptions of correctional official's existence of gang activity in correctional centers perpetuates male sexual assault. Correctional service officials need to be provided with a uniform definition of sexual assault in correctional centers. A uniform definition will provide them with a clear understanding of what constitutes a sexual offence as sexual assault. Training of correctional services officials. It is imperative that correctional service officials are trained on how to recognize the physical, behavioral, and emotional symptoms of sexual assault in correctional center. New admissions should be provided with information on male sexual assault, the consequences of accepting gifts or favors from other offenders. Offenders should be provided with different reporting mechanisms, such as having a box in each section of the medium where the offender can write the report and put it inside the box. This will allow offender to be able to report anonymously. Correctional centers should have posters around, especially in the cells about the awareness of male sexual assault. The Department of correctional services needs to consider hiring more staff as one of the major factors of sexual assault is understaffing in correctional center.

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