

# Importance of the Libraries in Kosovo Prisons

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## Abstract

This study aims to present the importance and current situation of the libraries in Kosovo Correctional Service; their function and effect on prisoners' daily lives, rehabilitation, well-being and informal education. To reach this purpose three questions were raised: Do libraries help with prisoners' informal learning, rehabilitation and reintegration in KCS? Are the prisoners willing to loan books from prison libraries? Do prison libraries in Kosovo offer enough books in different languages for prisoners who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds?

This research is presented through qualitative data, a literature review and interviews as instruments of the research dedicated to prison libraries within KCS and their effect on prisoners' wellbeing and education. The study results showed that prison libraries impact positively the lives of the incarcerated population while they are paying their debts to society in Kosovo prisons for the crimes committed. Prisoners are eager to borrow medium number of books present in different languages and genres offered to them within Correctional and Detention centers all around Kosovo.

**Keywords:** prison libraries; prisoner readers; books; rehabilitation; Kosovo Correctional Service.

## Introduction

“Libraries in the community are a source of education, information and recreation, as well as centres of cultural development” (Council of Europe, 1990). A society that does not invest in libraries condemns itself to ignorance and decay. Societal collapses happen when more investments are done on media, technology, TVs, social media, or entertainment rather than in books and libraries. The less we invest in school libraries, the more we invest in prison libraries.

Generally, reading can be divided into two groups: 1<sup>st</sup> readers are those who read for academic purposes, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ones do it for relaxing during their leisure time. Both of these categories are present in Correctional facilities, too. With only difference, the second group reading is mostly done of boredom and passing cell-time.

“One can safely say that incarcerated persons have a large number of unmet needs, which translate into a high demand for information, learning materials, and self-improvement resources; the library, in cooperation with other prison programs,

can play a vital role in meeting these needs” (Lehmann, 2000). Libraries are established to support all categories of readers. Previously, prison libraries had the purpose of converting readers, while in the modern era support the readers’ well-being and offer quality time while incarcerated. According to Vaccarino & Comrie (2010), prison libraries were firstly established for religious purposes but at present, they are seen as the main factors in raising literacy and education as a result of supporting prisoners’ rehabilitation and reintegration.

Sentenced prisoners and detainees are accommodated in a high-security prison, three correctional, one educational-correctional and six detention centers functioning under Kosovo Correctional Service. All the above-mentioned correctional facilities have functioning library systems for incarcerated persons. These special guests, who are temporarily separated from the rest of the society to serve their sentences, loan books, magazines and other reading material with the aim to support their rehabilitation and offer some quality time while inside. It also offers the great information resources for the incarcerated citizens who want to reenter into society as people who deserve the second chance.

These prison libraries are managed jointly by prisoners, and uniformed and civil prison staff members in correctional centers while in detention centers, in most of the cases, they are run by social workers.

There are three correctional facilities, one high-security prison and six detention centers within KCS that accommodate juvenile/female/male/adult detainees and sentenced prisoners. No matter their ethnic, religious, or criminal backgrounds, all the incarcerated people deserve humane treatment and equal opportunities to be offered and organized that will support their informal education and be beneficial in security, social, emotional and mental aspects. Kaiser (1992) states that “Prison libraries form a non-threatening link to the outside world, and in that sense are an obvious benefit not only to prisoners themselves but to the entire correctional system”.

According to article 14 and paragraph 1.6.3. of Law No. 04/L-097 for Law of Libraries voted by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2012), Public libraries within the overall function to ensure equal access and services to users, who for various reasons, cannot use the usual library services, organizing mobile libraries for those living in rural areas, who cannot move from home, who are in hospitals and prisons, for the blind and deaf-mute.

Kosovo prison libraries, which offer books in different genres and languages, function with similar distribution concepts as the ones in the free world. Apart from granting access to information, knowledge and education, prison libraries serve as an avoid-the-reality-door for isolated citizens. Thus, no matter their criminal backgrounds,

prisoners' dignity, psychological, emotional and education needs and circumstances are respected by prison administration and society itself.

Due to the circumstances, prisoner-readers have more time and need to spend time with books in comparison to their counterparts in the common world, who are distracted by mass media, and personal and professional obligations; thus, misuse their own 'freedom'.

Reading gains another dimension in prisons. Reading in prisons is related to rehabilitation, informal education, information, recreation and reentry of prisoners as rehabilitated citizens into society. "Today most Western nations attempt to strike a balance between rehabilitation of the offender and public safety" (Lehmann, 2000). Its value and benefits increase in comparison to people in the free world who spend more (waste) time on smartphones, games and social media; fortunately, these blessings are not present within prison premises for prisoners and staff members, too.

### **Informal education for prisoners through libraries**

No matter the conditions or settings, libraries in prisons and the free world play an important role and offer a great source of information to the informal educational system. Developed countries that expect to have low illiteracy levels in their societies, invest in their libraries and promote the benefits of reading from children up to nursing home inhabitants; including prisoners, too. Council of Europe (1990) recommends that "All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities."

Prisons are not institutions that only need to accommodate or isolate prisoners from the rest of the world but they are also used as schools and rehabilitation centers to educate and rehabilitate those members of our society with criminal backgrounds. Equal treatment and similar educational opportunities are to be ensured for prisoners, too. "As modern societies gradually adopt a more humane and enlightened practice of criminal justice and incarceration in accordance with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they shift their focus from punishment to education, rehabilitation, and constructive use of time" (Locke & Lehmann, 2005).

According to Article 80 for Library Services deriving from Administrative Instruction MoJ-No.07/20152 on House Rules in Correctional Institutions each institution needs to do act as follows:

- Each correctional institution should have a library to be used by all convicted persons.

- Library service is organized and monitored by responsible personnel, who maintains and enriches the library, distributes the literature and disseminates the knowledge and culture.
- Scientific, cultural and artistic pluralism should be taken into consideration in the selection of the literature.
- Reading without limitations and use of other information systems of the institutional library are favoured.
- Each library within a correctional institution should possess literature about prisoners' rights and treatment, basic penal legislation, criminal procedure and about prisoners' treatment".

Through plenty of time available, prisoners can use this time effectively in their cell bibliotheca to read different materials borrowed from prison libraries that function within Kosovo Correctional facilities. Council of Europe (1990) recommends that "Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once a week." With weekly or when the needed distribution of books, prisoner-readers are supplied with books of their interest. The findings of Curry et al. (2003) surveys show that apart from prisoners, prison staff, teachers, COs, tutors and volunteers use the blessings of the prison libraries.

Another opportunity for prisoners is to create a ground for future prisoner-writers through reading by expressing their pure imagination. Inspired by reading, some of the prisoners can express their feelings, experience and creativity in written forms in their cells, too. Floch & Case (1995) add that "most prisoners create a world of their own in their imagination during the years of their imprisonment."

Prisoners can share their insights, struggles and hopes through their stories. This work will help and inspire other convicts to write and cope with incarceration. Also, their engagement in similar activities, proves to society that everyone deserves a second chance and their dignity needs to be respected, too.

Even during the wars, the dignity and intellectual needs of captivated soldiers need to be respected, too. According to article 39 of the Geneva Convention on War Prisoners (1929) "Prisoners of war shall be permitted to receive individually consignments of books which may be subject to censorship." Further Shavit (1999) adds that "Books were the first and most important requirement in helping fight boredom, in occupying and often improving one's mind; they immediately came to the mind of anyone who wanted to help men in confinement. At the beginning of the Second World War, the International Red Cross Committee (IRC) in Geneva became involved in providing books to prisoners of war and civilian internees.

According to Milne, as cited by Edmund (2013), war prisoners preferred novels, that were unplanned reading materials encountered, to have a happy ending.

Following are finding from an interview with Haçif Ilazi a Kosovo war and political prisoner (1998-2001) and a current staff member at Prizren Detention Center (2004–Present). He was 21 at that time and was sentenced to 6 and half years for Terrorism by the Cruel Regime during Kosovo War in 1998 as a member of the Kosovo Liberation Army together with his brother Sherif Ilazi. In agitation, he describes his journey with books during his imprisonment in Kosovo and Serbia prisons full of suffering and torture (Dubrava Massacre survivor) that continued until his amnesty in 2001 as a result of political pressure from the international community.

In each prison (Prizren Detention Center, Lipjan and Dubrava Correctional Centers & Niš Detention and Correctional Centers in Serbia) there was a prison library but with forbidden access for Albanian war, political or common prisoners. Only books found in cells in the Serbian language of their Serbian cell-mates were allowed to be read. Sometimes, the families would bring books in the Albanian language during the visits. Plenty of time to read. He had read around 300 books as a war prisoner in Kosovo and Serbian prisons.

Mr. Ilazi remembers once his mother bringing two books for himself and his brother. His book was thinner in comparison to his brother's which was thicker and immediately objected to her that it will be read quickly. She just responded, "So, don't read it too fast!"

In most cases, newspapers were forbidden. He was not able to get news about the war and postwar Kosovo. He would get updates only through the greasy newspapers that their family members used, on purpose, to wrap up loaves of bread and food brought to him during the visits.

Another misfortune for him in possession of 5-6 novels and a Holy Bible was that he swapped it with the Holy Book of Quran with one of his friends during his transportation in a mini-van to Niš. He was stigmatized as Mujahideen by the prison officials; thus, Serbian correctional officers increased the dose of torture and ill-treatment on him after this misunderstanding.

Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" was Mr. Ilazi's favorite book during his imprisonment. In a way, he personalized it with his and his brother's misfortune. He states that he was not able to write because the "pen" or writing was forbidden to the Albanian war/political prisoners. Thus, they could not keep record of their suffering.

The only reading happened if their Serbian cell-mates permitted them to loan their books. Albanian war/political prisoners knew more about prison rules and law than the prison officials because they were more interested in reading and finding flaws in the Penal Code of Yugoslavia.

He stated that he had read more books inside prison than he did in free/outside life. Books had become his best friends and reading was his favorite pastime activity during the 2 hours of free time/out of the cell and the other 22 hours trapped in his cell where he was accommodated with 2 Serbian and 1 another Albanian prisoner in it.

Reading was a bridge between internal terrible reality and hope for a better life in liberated Kosovo. Reading in prison meant to cut himself off from the ugly prison reality that was full of sadness and suffering; to waste time, get informed about Kosovo, history, politics, culture, law, and science.

He returned home with 12-13 books including his favorite – the Human Anatomy Atlas. According to him, reading has helped him cope and reduce his PTSD after his release in 2001.

After the end of the Kosovo war, he returned to work in Prizren Detention Center as a social worker in 2004 and he was also appointed as a person in charge of the prison library and lately appointed as a deputy warden within the same penal institution. Rare case for a former war prisoner to return to a facility where he was illtreated and had experienced the cruelest treatment in his life from unjust conviction of the criminal regime.

### **Rehabilitation through books**

“Rehabilitation, that is, preparing the offender to function productively as a law-abiding citizen in society, is very costly” (Lehmann, 2000). Further, a prisoner Knudsen (2000) from Jackson Correctional Institution, Black River Falls, Wisconsin describes the prison library as “My library has helped me find the courage and strength, not only to overcome my incarceration, but also to strive for a more honest and productive future”.

“The library can play a critical and significant role in supporting and meeting the educational, cultural, recreational, informational and rehabilitative needs of the prison population” (Vaccarino & Comrie, 2010). “Prison library patrons are convicted felons whose crimes range from drunken driving to mass murder (Singer, 2000). Through reading, prisoners add to their knowledge, develop skills, relieve boredom and avoid disciplinary issues. “Establishing the library as a lively place, where events such as readings, debates, exhibitions and lectures take place, also supports its role as a source of book borrowing, etc.” (Council of Europe, 1990). As a result, the importance of books and libraries in prison that serve rehabilitative purposes cannot be neglected. The library is a synonym for a school. A source for a lifelong learning.

Rehabilitation through socializing is another benefit of prison libraries for the incarcerated persons. Different clubs can be established for prisoner-book-worms.

The social bond is created when the reading room is set aside for prisoners within the prison library walls. Prisoners dive into the books and later discuss and share their opinions with prison librarians, block representatives and other prison-reader-mates. Further, Lehmann (2000) adds that "The social and cultural activities may consist of film/video showings, lectures, book discussion groups, creative writing workshops, music listening, meetings of cultural and ethnic groups, art exhibits, and contests."

Access to the prison libraries is arranged during the working days for prisoner-library-members. Harrington (1974) states that "we should provide quality library services to prisoners because it is our duty to serve every segment of society. It is our professional responsibility, as well as a responsibility as citizens, to fill this need as best we can." Their personal and intellectual needs, dignity and integrity are respected by allowing them to loan books and magazines from the prison libraries offered similarly to our citizens in the common world.

Societal support for prisoners' rehabilitation is of great importance. Different programs and opportunities created by people in the free world for people behind bars add to the well-being and rehabilitation of those paying their debts to society itself. Floch & Casey (1995) state that the "prison library, by supplying books, by supplying action in the form of books, contributes to the community life that goes on behind prison walls."

Not all books available outside need to be brought within prison walls; some of them can harm the rehabilitation process. "...certain individual books and types of materials are strictly banned by security on the basis of "penological interest" (e.g., books on martial arts, firearms, organic chemistry, Satanism, etc., as well as those that advocate violence or racial hatred)" (Singer, 2000).

Library effect continues upon release, too. "When the time comes to prepare for release, the prison library can provide them with a wealth of job and career-related materials as well as community information that may help them survive the first critical months on the outside" (Lehmann, 2000).

### **Library infrastructure, book distribution and professional service**

"A prison library organizes its services and resources in order to meet inmates' needs for information, recreation, education, and leisure time" (Dilek-Kayaoglu & Demir, 2014). Lehmann and Locke (2005) suggest that "modern prison facilities, the physical space occupied by the library should be designed specifically for library use, work flow, and functionality." Additionally, Singer (2000) describes that in the medium/lower security prison facility "library appointments tend to be more 'luxurious', as wall hangings or other decorative art, wooden shelves, padded chairs, and carpets soften the environment. The placement of every object in the library is dictated by concerns for

institutional security and safety.” There are similar fully functioning libraries within Kosovo penitentiaries that offer different reading materials and services to their convict and detainee-readers.

According to Dilek-Kayaoglu & Demir (2014), the regulation of 2006 by the Ministry of Justice in Turkey describes the prison library service as a training and educational service. If the necessary adjustments in prison library services are made by taking into consideration modern country prison libraries’ functioning and legislation and the educational needs and conditions of the prisoners are met, prison libraries in Kosovo can help prisoners change and reenter society as the well-educated individuals.

With professional service, every word or page read, every character encountered in the books, and every setting presented in them to prisoners can help with their well-being and rehabilitation. “An incarcerated person has not relinquished the right to learn and to access information, and the prison library should offer materials and services comparable to community libraries in the “free” world” (Lehmann and Locke, 2005).

Mr. Avdi Lakna, who is the officer in charge of library education within the National Library of Kosovo, was invited to design the prison libraries in Lipjan and Dubrava correctional facilities in 2007. Mr. Lakna designed them according to public library standards by classifying books based on Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) but has not visited them ever since. He was a witness to a huge interest in books by the incarcerated persons in both correctional centers. In his publication during the Library Week in Kosovo, Lakna (2009) states that the role of the library related to education, development and re-socialization of this category of our society is important.

Many prisoners are not aware of prison library blessings. Some of them are uninformed related to prison-library-membership procedures, too. Not every person or prisoner had had the opportunity to get a proper education or get a library membership card in freedom.

Prison administration in cooperation with prison teachers, social workers and psychologists needs to develop strategies to establish this sacred bridge between prison libraries and prisoners. First, introduce the benefits of reading and its contribution to their rehabilitation and reintegration. Then, introduce the book genres and languages available to be read. Further, explain the registration process to libraries and finally the procedures and safety measures that need to be taken into consideration when obtaining reading materials from prison libraries and experienced librarians.

“When new librarians arrive at their jobs, they are often less prepared than I was for those elements which differentiate prison librarianship from its kindred disciplines” (Sing, 2000). Prison librarians need proper funding and fewer restrictions from prison administration and regime, less societal prejudice and full autonomy in

purchasing reading materials and running prison libraries. Establishing professional and productive cooperation with prisoners and other parties involved in security and educational goals within prison service is of great value for book distribution and purchasing.

Interlibrary – when the books requested by prisoners are not attainable from prison libraries, an exchange practice between prison libraries and the ones in the common world. “Wherever possible, prisoners should have direct access to an outside public library, which they should be able to visit from the prison on a regular basis” (Council of Europe, 1990). No matter their criminal backgrounds, prisoners’ dignity needs to be respected by granting access to public libraries, too. Additionally, it will solve the shelving issues within prison libraries, too. As the prisons are mostly designed for security and not for educational purposes.

Prison libraries differ from their counterparts in the free world by being restricted and restrained at all times. Being situated within high prison walls, monitored at all times by COs and cameras; surrounded by the barb-wired windows and metal doors, their work and access to them bring certain challenges. “The library fades to dark during lockdowns, often the result of violence or plant breakdowns and as often due to shortages of correctional officers assigned to escort users to the library from housing units or the absence of the correctional officer assigned to the librarian and the library users” (Vogel, 2009).

### **Book genres and languages available within KCS**

The Republic of Kosovo, being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, accommodates prisoners from different ethnic and social backgrounds who serve their sentences within Kosovo Correctional Service. Lehmann & Locke (2005) state that multicultural and multilingual users’ needs should be taken into consideration. The already available books within KCS, respect the dignity of all prisoners who come from different backgrounds and fulfill these requirements. But the number of books is not enough and never will be in any prison libraries all around the world.

When a list of books, to be purchased, is compiled, it needs to be done in consultation with prisoners. Every prisoner, who comes from different background, has different tastes in different genres. With adequate financial and citizen support, the prison readers’ needs can be taken into consideration. “All decisions from material selection to personal demeanor must be predicated upon a constant awareness of the unique character of the prison population” (Singer, 2000).

Prison libraries face challenges similar to those encountered in other types of libraries: the need to accomplish much within a limited budget, the difficulty of establishing and maintaining a collection used by a multicultural and multilingual population that

spans a wide spectrum of ages and educational backgrounds and the expectation that a high level of service will be provided (Curry, et al. 2003).

Book languages need to be adapted to prisoners' mother tongue and the language they understand. An opportunity, for prisoner-readers, to choose reading materials needs to be provided. Periodical surveys can also help to understand their preferences and needs.

According to Rubin (1983), "most librarians have clung to the idea that materials are of foremost importance when determining the quality of a prison library." Librarians, who work directly with prisoners and offer professional services, add value to prison libraries. In correctional centers, a librarian and a prisoner manage libraries together and offer the best service to their prisoner members. "Some correctional librarians avoid purchasing 'not worth reading' titles to save themselves from the stress of confrontation with management; some believe prisoners should read only works that are 'rehabilitating' and uplifting. Others follow the public library user-driven model" (Vogel, 2009).

Lakna (2009) cites library guidelines for special services for prisoners "it is mandatory to provide 20 titles of library material for every prisoner, while the total number must not be less than 2000 books for a prison library."

Not only from books can the incarcerated persons get information. Newspapers are a great source for reading and informal education, too. They offer news and updated information from the free world. They also contribute to order and discipline by keeping prisoners occupied. Currently, they are not available or distributed to convicts within KCS or people in the free world as a result of Kosovo's stopped printing newspapers anymore. According to Floch & Casey (1995), "books alone cannot solve the problem but they can do much to alleviate the conditions that cause it." Additional reading materials need to be provided to those isolated from society.

Some books are also bought by the prisoners and their family members during the visits. While most of them are supplied by prison management and donations from different local and international partners. These books can also be available for prison staff who like to read and enrich their general knowledge and at the same time learn about the rehabilitation and reintegration procedures and strategies of prisoners they are in charge of.

Some correctional facilities in the modern world started to ban donations and books by family and friends; especially in private prisons. Dilek-Kayaoglu & Demir (2014) state that in Turkey, according to the latest legislation, "The number and the type of periodicals and books purchased, librarians' and teachers' selections, and inmates and detainees' requests are to be determined and approved by the Education Board."

While Skopic (2021) states that the official reasoning is related to “contraband which poses a threat to the security, good order, or discipline of the facility” and they need to be obtained from authorized suppliers. Curry et al (2003) suggest that each party involved “...must strive to find a balance between rigid and over-reaching censorship that isolates inmates, perhaps impeding their reintegration into society, and open access to all information, some of which prisoners may misuse.

The future of prison library supplies and the lack of rehabilitation opportunities for prisoners through books just for the sake of the corporate and capitalist greed, political inadequacy and unprofessional authority can be neglected or misused.

Legal materials – “Most prison libraries are divided into two distinct segments: the general collection and the law library” (Singer, 2000). Many prisoner-readers prefer to dive into legal books. They strive to find a way or a flaw in the laws that will help their early release, sentence reduction, or learn more about their rights and duties as prisoners. Some prisoners, not coincidentally, express the desire to become men-of-law in the after-release period and defend other prisoners in front of the law; the empathy, towards their friends-of-fate, increases by studying law books.

According to officials in charge of libraries, there are enough books for every convict serving time or detainees awaiting their trials within the prison libraries in KCS. Office hours for prison libraries and prisoners who work there are similar to civilian staff members who work between 8 am and 4 pm. The prison librarians are always accompanied by correctional officers during their work in prison libraries.

Following is the total number of books in each correctional and detention centers within Kosovo Correctional Center obtained from the head of the social sector at KCS’ headquarters through an email:

- Dubrave Correctional Center - 2152
- Smrekonica Correctional Center - 1289
- Educational-Correctional Center in Lipjan (semi-open type) - 289
- Correctional Center for Juveniles in Lipjan (closed type) - 4481
- Peja Detention Center - 462
- Gjilan Detention Center - 754
- Prizren Detention Center - 504
- Mitrovica Detention Center - 668
- Prishtina Detention Center - 659
- Lipjan Women Correctional Center - 847
- Higher Security Prison -715

A donation of 843 books by the Albanian authors from Albania in 2022 were distributed/delivered proportionally to the above-mentioned centers, enriched the KCS libraries. Also, the "Education +" a local NGO in cooperation with Prizren Library and the American Corner Prizren collected books from citizens and book lovers from the same city. Fourteen boxes of books are donated to juvenile and adult women prisoners in Lipjan educational and correctional facilities for incarcerated juveniles and women on 20.05.2022. More similar campaigns are planned to be organized by the above-mentioned NGO. Both of the book donations are not added to the above-mentioned list, yet.

As a part of this research, the author interviewed social workers and staff members in charge of prison libraries in Prizren Detention Center, Lipjan Women Correctional Center, Lipjan Educational Correctional Center (open type) and Lipjan Correctional Center for Juveniles (closed type).

The first interview was done with a social worker (the above-mentioned war prisoner) at the Prizren Detention Center. According to him, there are 504 books in different genres in languages in Prizren Detention Center in the prison library within the same detention facility where accommodation capacity/beds are only 92. According to him, there are 272 books/novels in Albanian, 27 in English, 80 in Serbian and 25 in Turkish languages followed by 100 religious' books, mostly of Islam as the main religion in Kosovo.

Further, he states that there is a huge interest from incarcerated readers to loan books from the correctional library. English-Albanian dictionaries and English language learning coursebooks are among their favorites to improve their language skills. They follow the prison library borrowing procedures by writing a formal request that is sent to a person in charge of the library and after permission is granted, the readers are escorted by a CO to and back from the prison library. There is no strict deadline to return borrowed books; they can be brought back after read. The family members are also allowed to bring 2-3 books and pick them up after reading. Rarely, the released prisoners leave their books to their cell-mate-readers upon release in this facility.

The social worker also added that his colleagues and correctional officers are also regular readers of the detention library. COs do not follow the borrowing formalities. But a registration form is filled out just to keep a record of every book leaving the library. Unfortunately, he is concerned with no press offered for incarcerated persons as an additional information source as newspapers and magazines are not published in Kosovo anymore due to pandemic isolation, lack of reading and high cost.

He is concerned that every cell in Kosovo Correctional Service has a TV installed in the room thus challenging prisoner-readers to choose between reading and TV-programs, movies and entertainment on TV with no special setting to read within many correctional facilities, especially in detention centers. Thus, reading or borrowing books is decreased.

No reading can be done after 11 pm when the lights are turned off and darkness settles into cells.

Then the author's second interview was done with the officer in charge of the library within the Correctional Center for Juveniles in Lipjan. On the day of the interview, there were 46 incarcerated youngsters in this facility. The findings of this interview were presented below.

According to the officer in charge, there are 4,481 books available for male youngsters in this library. Most of them are in the Albanian language followed by Serbian, English and other languages. Books are of different genres. There are also Islamic books that respect the White List books approved by the Islamic Community in Kosova.

Further, the gentleman explained the procedures, membership cards, statistics and other information related to the above-mentioned library. According to him, juveniles do not need to submit a formal written request to loan books from this library. Through a verbal request, the incarcerated juveniles are escorted by a CO. Two books can be issued to them that need to be returned within 15 days.

Total 56 registered readers were in this correctional facility for the year 2021. While for 2022, there are 26 readers registered until May 14<sup>th</sup> when the interview took place.

Two types of library cards that are issued for every reader:

1. A reader's or a registration card, that remains in the library.

|                            |              |              |                         |                         |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Name & Surname:            |              |              | A number of the reader: |                         |
| Status:                    |              |              | Block:                  |                         |
| Title of the book & Author | Index Number | Date loaned: | Due Date:               | Signature of the reader |
|                            |              |              |                         |                         |
|                            |              |              |                         |                         |

*An imitation of a reader's card.*

2. A membership card is taken by the readers to their cells-reading-rooms.

|        |              |      |           |                            |       |
|--------|--------------|------|-----------|----------------------------|-------|
| Number | Year         | Name | Surname   | Status                     | Block |
| Title  | Date loaned: |      | Due date: | Signature of the Librarian |       |
|        |              |      |           |                            |       |
|        |              |      |           |                            |       |

*An imitation of a membership card.*

Most of the incarcerated young people are the regular readers. Some of the them can misuse it and ask to visit library just a mean to waste time. Books can be damaged sometimes by carelessness. No sanctions are imposed due to their emotional, mental and social circumstances.

Sometimes, the incarcerated juveniles get books from their family members, too. Books are screened by security officers for possible contraband or forbidden books and later handed over to them. Upon their release, some books are donated to prison library or given away to their cell-mate-readers.

There is no book club or a reading hall in the above-mentioned correctional center. Readers can only read books inside their cells. This can be challenging due to the presence of the TV and other cellmates who have different interests and ways on how to spend their free time. Some of the readers read in the recreational room but face difficulties due to the noise created by others.

The incarcerated youngsters who attend schooling within this facility, also borrow books requested by the teachers, especially the language and literature teachers ask for additional literature to be read, analyzed and summarized for the next class.

Due to safety and security issues, lack of financing and donations, there are no technological blessings as e-books, e-book readers, and audio-books present for juveniles.

There are no publications, of youngsters' writing, done by the correctional facility in Lipjan. Juveniles are not so keen on writing or are not motivated enough or instructed to do so.

Prison libraries within KCS have no individual budget allocated for them. Everything is run through the HQ and books are mostly supplied by donations or through the cooperation with the Lipjan Public Library and Kosova National Library.

The third interview was done with a social worker and other prison administration staff at the open Lipjan Educational-Correctional Center that accommodates male juveniles. In this educational-correctional facility, there were 11 male juveniles present on the day of the interview (13.05.2022).

The prison library, in this open correctional facility has 289 books mostly in the Albanian language. The procedures are simplified so the readers can access books easily without lots of formalities. It also offers a cool reading hall, with no TV in it, for the incarcerated readers. No reading club is established, yet. Readers can spend their day reading books and magazines in this modern correctional facility. No cameras are installed inside this prison library. Thus, readers' dignity and privacy are fully respected.

Unfortunately, not many juveniles choose to read and spend their days in it according to the officials.

There are no e-books or other technology for reading offered for juveniles in this facility. Only university students can access study materials on e-books so they can study for their exams.

The last interview is done with a social worker at Lipjan Women Correctional Center and an incarcerated woman who was appointed as a librarian in this facility. There were 34 incarcerated women and 220 books on the day of the interview. The number of books did not correspond with the number presented from the official list sent from the HQ (see above). The books were mostly in the Albanian language, followed by books in English, German, Turkish, etc.

The incarcerated women can loan books each week with no formal written request needed to be handed in. Detained women are better readers in comparison to convicted women. An incarcerated woman read 8 books for 6 months; while the other one read 28 books in a year. They can only read books in their cells because there is no reading hall offered for them in this huge facility.

Family members can also bring books from the outside world. They are controlled before being taken to their cells.

Following are the summarized findings resulting from the brief questionnaire distributed to incarcerated juveniles and women in the following correctional facilities:

a. Correctional Center for Juveniles in Lipjan b. Educational-Correctional Center in Lipjan and c. Lipjan Women Correctional Center.

- a. 23 juveniles of the average age of 18 from CCJL. 52.2% of incarcerated juveniles held an elementary and the other of 47.8% were high school graduates.
  - The interest in loaning books among this category of incarcerated citizens was high. 82.6% of them stated they were borrowing books from the prison library while similar respond of 2x8.7% declared sometimes and did not at all.
  - An average of 1.4% of books per month were loaned by readers. The top five preferred books among this group of readers are Religious, Historical, Psychological, Scientific and Novels.
  - Most of them, respectively, 76.2% of incarcerated juveniles believe that reading adds to their well-being, 14.3% stated just a little is added to it and the rest 9.5% declared as an inadequate pastime activity.
  - Further, 85.7% of the responders asserted that reading supports their rehabilitation, 9.5% of were skeptical about it while only 4.8% of them noticed any effect reflected on their welfare.

- Less than half, exactly 47.6% of teenagers get additional books from their family members during the visits, 14.3% stated that sometimes do their families bring extra reading materials while the rest 38.1% of them never get any books. Both the parties are aware that each book is first screened before being taken to the rooms.
  - All of the incarcerated juveniles are satisfied with the loaning system in the prison library. Also, 81% of them are pleased with the literature offered, 14.3% stated that it can be better and only one (5%) of them were not content with the literature present and the work of a librarian.
  - TVs present in cells did not bother 80% of the youngsters' reading; while similar answers were got from 2x10% of them said yes and sometimes on having a concentration issue from the noise box.
  - The following are the main reasons why incarcerated young people borrow book from prison library and read them in their cells. Multiple answers were allowed: 52.4% to acquire knowledge, 47.6% for rehabilitation purposes, 42.9 vocabulary enrichment, 33.3% for personal well-being, 2x23.8 for relaxation and education/studies, 19% to burn the daylight, and only one (4.8%) of them use it to break from reality.
  - Discipline is one of the main issues of incarcerated persons. 90% of them affirmed reading adds to their positive behavior. Two groups 2x5% of them responded no with sometimes. Thus, it can be seen that the benefits of books are countless.
  - No additional comments were added by the incarcerated young people at the end of the survey.
- b. Eight juveniles of the average age of 18 from semi-open ECCL took part in this survey. - 37.5% of the incarcerated youngsters were elementary and the rest 62.5% were high school graduates (a few of them attended the university classes).
- Most of the juveniles in this facility, respectively 75% of them confirmed reading books while 25% of them declared that sometimes borrow books from the prison library with an average of 2.25% of books loaned per month.
  - The top five book types preferred, by this group of readers, were: Religious, law, psychological, historical and novels.
  - According to their responses, 62.5% of them believed reading supports their rehabilitation, and 37.5% of them stated that a little will be affected by reading. Related to their well-being while serving time or awaiting their trial, 75% believed reading is adding to it. 2x12.5% showed skepticism by responding a little respectively not at all.

- Only 25% of accepted that their family members had brought books during the visits. 2x37.5% stated sometimes respectively never get books from outside.
  - 87.5% of the incarcerated juveniles from the semi-open EC facility were satisfied with both, prison library functioning and work and attitude of the librarians while 12.5% in both cases were a little happy or not at all with the prison library system and its functionality.
  - 87.5% of the readers were not bothered by the sounds coming from TVs in their cells. Only one of them, 12.5%, expressed the negative effect of technology in an area where he wanted to dedicate it to reading.
  - Related to the books present in the prison library, only 37.5% said there was enough literature available to them in it. The majority of 62.5% constructively declared that with more investments or donations to the prison library would do a better job. 2x50% of them stated being allowed, respectively sometimes allowed to spend time in a reading room.
  - Multiple answers to "What motivate you to read books in a correctional facility?" are shown in percentages: 2x62.5% acquiring knowledge, respectively enriching the vocabulary; 2x37.5% stated for rehabilitation, exactly for their well-being; 2x25% for educational and to waste time; 2x12.5% for relaxation, especially, escaping the reality.
  - 87.5% of the youngsters from the above-mentioned penal institution stated that reading reduces negative behavior. While only 12.5% of them were pessimists about the effect of books on their positive attitudes.
  - Only two readers shared additional comments in the last-open ended question translated from the Albanian into the English language:
    - i. "I think reading books is necessary and efficient to develop our vocabulary and for our education."
    - ii. "Reading, especially the work of Albanian Renaissance Writers, encourages me to cope with the bitter reality, to enrich my vocabulary and intellectual development. Reading also helps in elaborating and developing the ideas."
- c. In total 19 incarcerated women of an average age of 36 from LWCC responded to the survey. Ladies belonged to the different status groups: 57.9% were sentenced and while the rest of 42.1% were detainees. 36.8% of them held an elementary, 31.6% high school and other 31.6% had a university degree (an incarcerated woman held three university degrees).
- Incarcerated women of the above-mentioned correctional facility were regular readers. 84.2% of them borrowed books from the inside library. 10.5% of them stated they sometimes visited and borrowed books and only 5.3% do

not deal with books at all. Monthly 3 books were an average of them being borrowed by women.

- The preferred types of books were 2x63.2% novels, respectively, psychological. Followed by 42.1% of religious books, 31.6% history, 2x26.3% law and medical materials, and 4x21.1% chose fiction, linguistics, science and art reading materials.
- All of the incarcerated women believe reading helps with their rehabilitation.
- 83.3% of them consider reading added value to their well-being while paying the debt to society. Only 16.7% of them were a little skeptical about its value on their prosperity.
- Only 21.1% of them got additional books from their families. 5.2.% stated that sometimes she got books from outside world. 73.7% responded never getting any reading materials from visits.
- All of the readers were satisfied with the work of the librarian who happen to be their cellmate. But express their concern about the loaning system. Half of them, 55.6% were pleased with its functioning of prison library, while 33.3% expressed their dissatisfaction and only 11.1% declared better functionality can be arranged.
- About a reading setting with a TV in it, 84.2% were not bothered by its presence while reading. 10.5% sometimes had issues with the sounds coming out of it. Only one of them, 5.3%, had an issue with TV installed in her cell, as the only setting to read.
- 73.7% of women stated not enough literature was available in the library. 15.8% were happy with the reading materials offered. The rest, 10.5%, hoped for more improvements and more supply in the future.
- As the reasons to read, the incarcerated women named acquiring knowledge as the top, 68.4%, reason for reading within prison walls. Followed by 47.4% for who stated that they read for relaxation, passing timers were 26.3% of them, 3x15.8% chose personal well-being, education/studies and to break from reality.
- 64.8% of their reading pastime supported women's positive attitude and helped them avoid unnecessary discipline issues. 26.3% stated sometimes and only 5.3% were doubters of the influence of reading on their positive behavior.
- In the end, the author presents additional comments given by the incarcerated women in the last open-ended question translated from Albanian into the English language. Not of them are directly linked to the research topic. The author wanted to be their voice among the other researchers, free world and those who still judge them based on their criminal backgrounds.

- i. "Three of the ladies asked for more activities to fight the boredom of being closed most of the time which affects their emotional states"
- ii. "Books are one's best friend. Thus, you always need one near you, at home, tram, park, beach, subway, train, airplane, ship, prison... wherever life takes you"
- iii. "Books should be the best friend of an incarcerated person"
- iv. "Books are important. There should be more books in the library. It is necessary to read them. My favorite novels are from Meryl Victor Spinoza and Ernest Hemingway. I have almost read most of them. To have or not to have"
- v. "Two of the ladies asked for more options of books to be present, please. The books available in the library presently were not enough"
- vi. "With full consciousness, I state that women need to be educated. Because a woman educates children for a brighter future"

## Conclusion

This research was focused on the books and other reading material available and their types and languages offered within Kosovo prison libraries. Their importance on educational, mental, emotional, social and well-being aspects of prisoners, while serving their sentences and awaiting their trials, is unquestionable. Rule 40 of the United Nations Standard Minimal Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1955) requires that "every institution shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it."

Since it is difficult, time-consuming and can create safety issues at the same time. More practical approaches from modern world prison libraries need to be applied. For instance, distributing books to each block/wing in a handcard would save some time and reach more prisoner-readers within correctional facilities rather than bringing/escorting hundreds of them each week to prison libraries. Also, electronic and audio books to be offered, especially to the incarcerated juveniles would be of great importance and relieve.

Additionally, Coyle (1987) states that a "warden or chief of security who recognizes the library's importance to the inmates may develop a keen interest in the library as a stabilizing tool in the running of the institution." Additionally, to prisoners' well-being and rehabilitation support, the positive effects of reading affect the safety and security of prison life for both: prisoners and COs.

Book clubs to be established within correctional and educational-correctional centers for adult male, female and juvenile prisoners. A room dedicated only for reading will create an atmosphere where the incarcerated readers will read, discuss, socialize and share ideas with each other. It will also act as an extra-curricular activity that will bring prisoner-bookworms together in one room and allow sharing their interests and knowledge. It will give them a chance to feel included and their dignity respected and become role models and encourage reading of their cellmates, too.

Prisoners need to be able to choose the type and language of books they want to read. Offering books according to their preferences and explaining them the value and importance of reading will increase the book loaning. Reading will also support achieving their educational goals and use it as a means to cope with the reality within four walls. Books will drive them out of the prison cells through their imagination and deriving from reading and later writing.

The results of the study presented that the incarcerated persons show interest in borrowing books from prison libraries in Kosovo. Reading reasons can differ from acquiring knowledge, fighting boredom, getting updates, developing skills, reading for their informal education, etc. The prisoners feel their dignity is being respected no matter their criminal backgrounds. On the other hand, it keeps them busy and away from disciplinary issues with other prisoners or correctional officers.

“When the library provides an inviting environment and a helpful staff, it becomes a popular gathering place and a center for leisure and recreational activities” (Lehmann, 2000).

Creative writing classes in mother tongues or the English language need to be offered to the incarcerated so they can empty their souls through the pen and share their stories and experience with the rest of the world; especially with those who still judge them based on their criminal backgrounds and who also do not want any public money to be spent on them.

To sum up, prison libraries are the best and most productive places to be for prisoners within correctional facilities. They offer a door to escape from the reality through the variety of free reading materials in many genres and languages for educational and recreational purposes that support rehabilitation and well-being of prisoners.

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