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Examining the social perspectives on death penalty abolition: A case study of Mwembeshi maximum correctional facility

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Abstract
This research examines the social perspectives on the abolition of the death penalty, with a case study of Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility in Zambia. A mixed-methods approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data was collected through interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions with inmates, correctional staff, and community members. The findings of this research reveal a significant opposition to the death penalty among both community members and correctional staff, with 70% of respondents in each group expressing disapproval. The research there is the complex attitudes towards capital punishment within society and its implications for public policy and criminal justice as 30% of respondents, comprising both community members and correctional staff, perceive the death penalty as a viable public safety measure. abolishment of the death penalty aligns with their moral and religious values of 70% both the correctional facility staff and the community. The abolishing the death penalty has improved perceptions of Zambia's justice system as indicated by 75% of respondents. For the staff, the abolition has raised complex issues regarding the management of inmates serving life sentences and the need for a shift from punitive to rehabilitative correctional approaches. Staff members also report heightened operational demands, with many expressing concerns about overcrowding, resource shortages, and the need for additional training to manage these evolving roles effectively. The abolition has thus prompted a reconsideration of the existing infrastructure and policies, making it clear that the correctional system must adapt to fulfil its rehabilitative mandate sustainably.

Keywords: Death penalty, abolition, social perspectives, inmates

1. Introduction
This chapter will focus on the, background of the study, problem identification, purpose, rationale, objectives identification and stating the significance of the study. In addition, the research will outline the theoretical framework.

1.1 Background
The death penalty, also known as capital punishment, has a long and contentious history in the field of criminal justice. It involves the execution of a person as a punishment for a crime, typically the most serious crimes such as murder and treason. Advocates of the death penalty argue that it serves as a powerful deterrent to crime and provides a sense of retribution for victims and their families (Bedau & Cassell, 2004) [2]. However, opponents of the death penalty have raised profound ethical concerns, including the risk of executing innocent individuals and the violation of fundamental human rights (Bienen, 1998).

In recent years, a remarkable and increasingly widespread global trend has emerged: the abolition or significant restriction of the death penalty in numerous countries worldwide. This movement towards reconsidering and revising capital punishment policies has gained momentum for several compelling reasons.

One nation that has actively participated in this worldwide movement toward death penalty abolition is Zambia, a sovereign state located in southern Africa. In a landmark decision in 2020, Zambia took a momentous step by abolishing the death penalty for all offenses except for acts of terrorism (Zambia Reports, 2020). This significant policy change was a testament to Zambia's commitment to aligning its legal framework with evolving international human

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rights standards and principles. The implications of this policy change in Zambia extend far beyond the realm of legal reform. They resonate deeply within the Zambian criminal justice system, raising a host of critical questions and challenges.

Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility, a significant institution located in the Lusaka Province of Zambia, plays a pivotal role in the nation's corrections system. It is home to a diverse and complex population of inmates, many of whom are serving lengthy sentences for serious criminal offenses. The facility's central role in the practical implementation of Zambia's new policy on the death penalty makes it an ideal case study for understanding the real-world ramifications of this policy shift.

As Zambia navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by the abolition of the death penalty, there emerges a pressing need for empirical research to comprehensively investigate the consequences of this significant legal and policy transformation. Such research is essential to shedding light on the multifaceted effects of death penalty abolition on inmates, correctional facility staff, and the broader criminal justice system. By undertaking a rigorous examination of these impacts, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform future policy decisions, enhance correctional practices, and contribute to the ongoing global discourse surrounding the death penalty.

1.2 Statement of the problem
The abolition of the death penalty in Zambia marks a significant shift in its criminal justice system, yet societal implications are underexplored. In 2020, Zambia abolished capital punishment for all but terrorism offenses (Zambia Reports, 2020), but practical effects, especially in facilities like Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility, remain undocumented. Housing many former death row inmates, Mwembeshi raises questions about their treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Global trends favor human rights-focused justice, but local contexts like Zambia's influence policy outcomes. The Death Penalty Information Center notes that abolishing capital punishment often alters prison management and inmate behavior, yet specific data for Zambia is scarce (DPIC, 2020). Understanding societal perspectives is crucial for grasping broader impacts on justice and social cohesion. Mixed reactions exist: some support humane justice systems, others fear increased crime rates (Amnesty International, 2021). This research aims to examine social perspectives on abolition at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility, providing insights to guide future policies and correctional strategies.

1.3 General objective
The general objective of this study is to examine the social perspectives on the abolition of the death penalty at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility in Zambia.

1.4 Specific objectives
- To establish the perceptions of correctional facility staff at Mwembeshi correctional facility regarding the abolition of the death penalty.
- To analyze the broader societal views of the community around Mwembeshi correctional facility on the abolition of the death penalty.

- To establish the perceptions of inmates at Mwembeshi correctional facility regarding the abolition of the death penalty.
- To Evaluate Policy Implications Based on Social Perspectives Towards Death Penalty Abolition.

1.5 Significance of the study
This study is significant as it provides a comprehensive examination of the implications of death penalty abolition in Zambia, focusing on its effects within correctional facilities and the broader criminal justice system. By analyzing the Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility, the research fills a critical gap in the literature, offering empirical insights into how abolition affects inmates, staff, and institutional dynamics. These findings can inform future research, policy development, and the implementation of best practices in correctional systems, contributing to more humane and effective approaches to criminal justice.

The research also has broader implications for policymaking, public awareness, and international discourse. It equips lawmakers and practitioners with evidence-based insights to shape policies on sentencing, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Public awareness generated by the study can foster greater empathy and societal support for humane justice practices. Beyond Zambia, the findings can contribute to global discussions on the death penalty's ethics, efficacy, and human rights implications, potentially influencing reforms worldwide.

1.7 Theoretical framework
This study adopts the Human Rights Theory as its guiding framework to analyze social perspectives on the abolition of the death penalty at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility. This theory emphasizes that all individuals possess inherent rights, including the fundamental right to life, which must be protected regardless of their actions. From this perspective, the death penalty is deemed a violation of human rights, constituting cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment (United Nations, 2007). The theory also underscores the importance of due process, the prevention of wrongful executions, and the preservation of human dignity, even for those convicted of serious crimes (Amnesty International, 2021).

In the context of Mwembeshi, the Human Rights Theory provides a framework to assess how death penalty abolition aligns with international standards and its implications for inmate rights and treatment. It helps explore the broader social and ethical considerations of capital punishment abolition, advocating for justice systems that prioritize human dignity and minimize irreversible errors, such as wrongful executions, while protecting the rights of all individuals within the criminal justice system.

2. Literature review
2.1 Overview
The death penalty is practical according to Gross and Ellsworth (1978), because in a realistic world, when crime goes up, people look for harsher punishments to bring it down. Death is ultimate, and people have strong sentiments regarding certain violent crimes that only the death penalty can do justice to.

Rankin (1979) reiterates the same conclusion in his assessment and extrapolates that there exists a strong positive non-linear relationship between the support for

capital punishment and violent crime. Crime, and specifically violent crime, harbors an emotion of anger in the public. Anger is somehow connected to justice. It is practical to have an institution like the death penalty that the public can have a legal channel to vent their utmost anger to the objects of anger (criminal). After all, attitudes regarding the death penalty are not based on rational concerns at all, but are primarily symbolic attitudes, based on emotions. Thus, death penalty is practical because it serves the emotional purpose.

The criminal justice system according to some scholars that favor the death penalty, rests on the proposition that harder punishment are more deterrent than less severe punishment. Dezhbaksh, Rubin, and Shepherd (2003) argue that the conventional intimidation of capital punishment has accomplished its stated goal in deterring most coherent people from committing a criminal act, and that the apprehension of the harsh punishment continues to deter all but those who cannot be dissuaded by the imposition of any punishment. Their study concludes that capital punishment has a strong deterrent effect; each capital punishment results, on average, in 18 fewer murders approximately.

Bohm *et al.*'s (1991) study used a pretest-posttest method with a class on the death penalty being the experimental stimulus. The control group and the experimental group took a general knowledge test about the death penalty. The results showed support for Marshall's first conjecture. Two-hundred seventy-two subjects from the control and experimental groups on average answered only 52% of the general knowledge death penalty questions correctly. The study indicated that the subjects had some knowledge about the death penalty and its effects, but they were not considered well-informed.

According to Bohm and Vogel (1994) reasons for death penalty opinion do not lead to changes in their opinion but rather act as justifications for their strongly held opinions. Consequently, information on the subject is "assimilated biasedly" and only further "polarizes" positions. Bohm and Vogel cite Lord *et al.* (1979) in explaining how information on the death penalty is not processed impartially: individuals dismiss and discount empirical evidence that contradicts their initial views and derive support from evidence of no greater probative value that seems consistent with their views (Bohm & Vogel, 1994).

According to Wilson (2019), At the international level, a majority of countries in the world have now abandoned the use of the death penalty. By the end of March 2005, 84 countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes, 12 had abolished it for all but exceptional crimes such as wartime crimes, and 24 had abolished it in practice (de facto abolitionists). This makes a total of 120 countries in the world that have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. 76 other countries retain and use the death penalty (retentionists). In Africa, as of the end of March 2005, 12 countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes, 18 had abolished it in practice and 23 still retain and use the death penalty.

Ndulo (2015) [5], further narrates that Mwanawasa said the death penalty as "inhuman" and said it should not be maintained on Zambia statutes April 2003, a commission to review the constitution was appointed to review the existing constitution, one of the specific terms of reference given to this constitution Review Commission was to advice on the death penalty in Zambia. In 2005, the CRC had recommended that the death penalty should be retained in the next constitution following submissions made by petitioners across Zambia; however, the final decision is up to parliament. On December 18, 2008 and December 21st 2020, Zambia abstained on the Resolution on a Moratorium on the use of the Death penalty at the UN General Assembly.

Lakoff (1996) provides an interesting take on this issue, arguing that different views on punishment in different political camps are based on conflicting moral systems. As a cognitive linguist Lakoff studies how people conceptualise the world, and in his study of conservatives versus liberals in the United States he claims that differing moral systems are grounded in differing models of the family. This "[…] link between family-based morality and politics comes from one of the most common ways we have of conceptualizing what a nation is, namely, as a family" (Lakoff 1996: 13). The conservatives base their moral system on a "strict father model", seeing crime as a result of a lack of discipline and believing in the deterrent effect of strict punishment, including the death penalty. Liberals, on the other hand, adhere to the "nurturant parent model", believing that violence begets violence and that crime is caused by social factors and best prevented by relieving social problems. Nurturance implies respect for life, and liberals are therefore more likely to favour abolition of capital punishment (Lakoff 1996).

Greenberg and West (2008) present a somewhat different argument concerning the relationship between experience with war and abolition of the death penalty. They claim that a country involved in a war will develop a political culture where "an enemy is depicted as an implacable foe" and where killing is endorsed as necessary for the defence of society. This logic can easily be extended to those considered to be internal enemies, such as criminals (Greenberg and West 2008: 311). Involvement in war can therefore be expected to reduce the likelihood of a country abolishing the death penalty for ordinary as well as for war-time crimes. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that a political culture of this kind will not change overnight when the war ends, but rather that it may gradually be replaced. Thus, there is reason to expect the negative effect of experience with war to diminish as the years go by without another war. Conversely, the likelihood of abolition can be expected to increase with the number of years that have passed since such an experience. Vaughan argues that owing to the civilizing process "we have recourse to less brutal forms of punishment because we perceive aenthusiasm for public bloodletting or beatings as the mark of a lower, less-refined order of people" (2000, p. 78). Spierenburg (2008)-one of the few criminologists that has aptly explained how our punishment methods have become more civilized-refers to how from the 16th century until these days violence has experience a sharp decline because of our propriety and niceness which "loaded with a wide range of evaluative connotations expressing the West's sense of superiority" (Goudsblom & Mennell, 1997, p. 30). As a result, with the rates of violence dropping dramatically and with our civility increasing, executions in the civilized West have been abandoned and life imprisonment has become a more humane and acceptable form of punishment in our modern penal system (Pratt, 2011).

2.2 Personal critique of the literature review

The literature review offers a well-rounded exploration of various perspectives on the death penalty, blending empirical evidence, theoretical frameworks, and historical context. It effectively juxtaposes arguments supporting the death penalty, such as deterrence and emotional justice, with opposing views rooted in human rights considerations. However, several aspects could be strengthened to enhance its depth and relevance.

While the review cites global trends and statistical analyses supporting the deterrent effect of the death penalty, it fails to critically evaluate the methodological limitations of these studies. For instance, the claims by Dezhbaksh *et al.* (2003) about the deterrent effect lack scrutiny regarding confounding variables that could affect murder rates. Additionally, the literature leans heavily on Western-centric perspectives, with limited focus on African or Zambian contexts, which are crucial for understanding local attitudes and justice systems.

Moreover, the literature could benefit from integrating more recent studies, particularly post-2010, to ensure that findings align with current trends in criminal justice reform. The discussion of emotional and symbolic attitudes towards the death penalty is compelling, but it overlooks how these sentiments vary culturally or geographically, especially in regions like Zambia, where societal values might differ significantly.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach to examine social perspectives on the abolition of the death penalty at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility in Zambia. By focusing on inmates and correctional staff, it aims to provide in-depth insights into the impacts of this policy change within the correctional system. Data will be collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, utilizing a combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to select a diverse group of 50 participants. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding while balancing resource constraints (Creswell, 2005).

Data analysis will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive and inferential statistics will analyze quantitative data using SPSS, while thematic analysis will be applied to qualitative data using NVivo. These methods allow for a detailed exploration of inmate experiences, institutional dynamics, and broader implications of abolishing the death penalty. Triangulation enhances the validity of findings by compensating for each data source's strengths and weaknesses (Topel& Robert, 1994). Ethical considerations are paramount, with measures in place to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and participant rights throughout the process.

Despite potential limitations, such as challenges in accessing incarcerated participants due to their circumstances, the study aims to fill a critical gap in the literature. By adhering to ethical guidelines and employing rigorous methodology, this research seeks to inform future policy development, enhance correctional practices, and contribute to more humane and effective approaches within the criminal justice system, both in Zambia and beyond.

4. Research Findings and Discussions
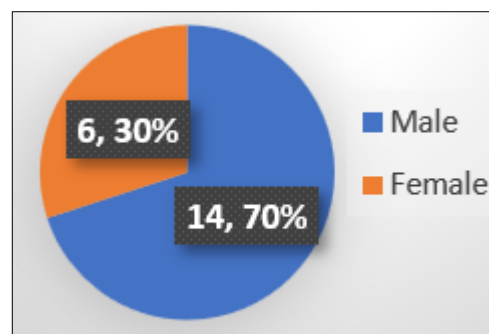### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Fig 1: Gender

As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution among the staff at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility indicates a predominance of male staff, who comprise 70% (14 individuals) of the total respondents. In contrast, female staff represent 30% (6 individuals). This gender imbalance may reflect broader trends in correctional facilities, where male employees typically outnumber female counterparts.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
age	20	42.4	10.73313	26	58

Fig 2: Age

The average age of the staff respondents is 4.1.2 years, as indicated in Table 4.1.2. This average is accompanied by a standard deviation of 10.73 years, suggesting a moderately diverse age range. The youngest staff member is 26 years old, while the oldest is 58 years old.
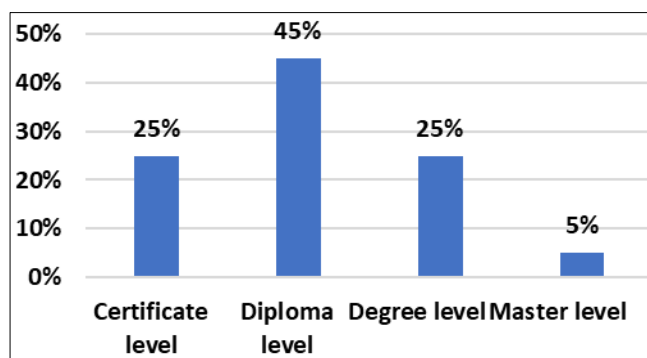

Fig 3: Education

Figure 3. Presents the educational backgrounds of the staff, revealing a varied level of educational attainment. A significant 45% (9 staff members) hold a diploma, while 25% (5 staff members) possess either certificate or degree qualifications, respectively. Only one staff member (5%) has achieved a master's degree. This diverse educational landscape may impact staff approaches to policy implementation and their understanding of complex issues related to the death penalty and inmate rehabilitation.

The distribution of current positions among staff, as depicted in Table 4.1.4, shows that 45% (9 staff members) serve as correctional officers, representing the largest group. Administrative staff account for 25% (5 staff members), while rehabilitation officers make up 20% (4 staff members) and medical staff constitute 10% (2 staff members). This

breakdown highlights the multifaceted nature of roles within the facility, suggesting diverse perspectives on the abolition of the death penalty, depending on each staff member's responsibilities and experiences.
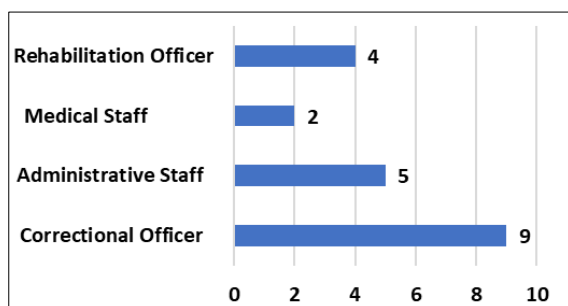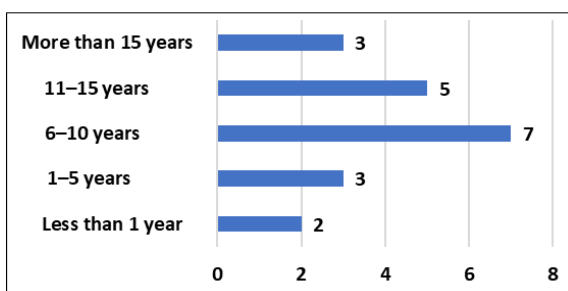

Fig 4: Current Positions

Fig 5: Years of Service

Figure 5 illustrates the years of service among the staff, indicating a relatively experienced workforce. The majority of respondents (35%, or 7 staff members) have served between 6-10 years, while 25% (5 staff members) have between 11-15 years of service. Additionally, 15% (3 staff members) have more than 15 years, and 15% (3 staff members) have between 1-5 years.
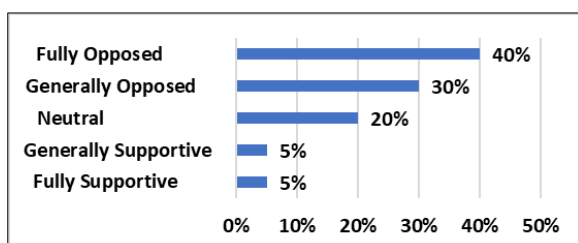
Fig 6: Personal Stance on the Morality of the Death Penalty

As depicted in Table 2, staff members at Mwembeshi Maximum Correctional Facility expressed varied moral stances on the death penalty. A significant 40% (8 individuals) reported being fully opposed, while 30% (6 individuals) are generally opposed. In contrast, only 5% (1 individual) fully supports the death penalty, and another 5% is generally supportive. Meanwhile, 20% (4 individuals) remain neutral.

When asked if the death penalty is a morally justifiable form of punishment, as shown in Figure 4.1.7, 30% (6 individuals) strongly disagree and an additional 30% (6 individuals) disagree, indicating a significant portion of staff do not see the death penalty as morally justifiable. However, 25% (5 individuals) agree, and 5% (1 individual) strongly agree with its moral justification, while 10% (2 individuals) remain neutral.
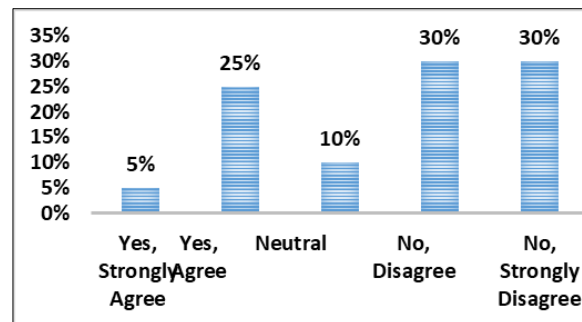

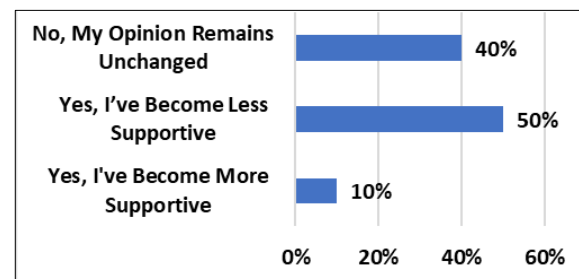**Fig 7:** Morally Justifiable Punishment

Fig 8: Evolution of Morality Views over Time

Figure 8 reveals that 50% (10 individuals) have become less supportive of the death penalty over time, indicating an evolving perspective influenced by various factors. Meanwhile, 40% (8 individuals) report that their opinions have remained unchanged, and 10% (2 individuals) have grown more supportive. This trend of declining support over time aligns with broader shifts towards viewing capital punishment as misaligned with modern correctional goals and may affect staff approaches to inmate management and rehabilitation.
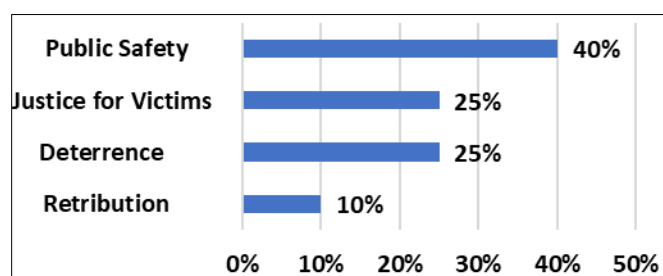

Fig 9: Ethical Justifications for the Death Penalty

In Figure 9, staff members identify public safety (40%, or 8 individuals) as the most frequently cited ethical justification for the death penalty, followed by deterrence (25%, or 5 individuals) and justice for victims (25%, or 5 individuals). Retribution is the least cited justification, with only 10% (2 individuals) indicating it as an ethical basis. This prioritization of public safety and deterrence suggests that staff who support the death penalty do so out of concern for broader societal protection rather than punitive motives.

Figure 10 highlights that 65% of staff (13 individuals) agree or strongly agree that cultural, religious, or societal factors influence the perceived morality of the death penalty. Only 30% (6 individuals) disagree, while 5% (1 individual) remains neutral.
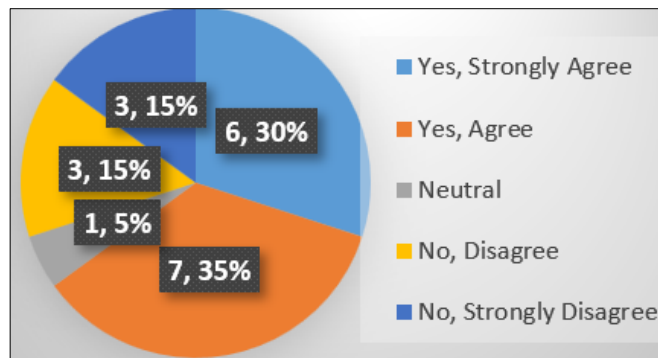
Fig 10: Influence of Cultural, Religious, and Societal Factors on Morality
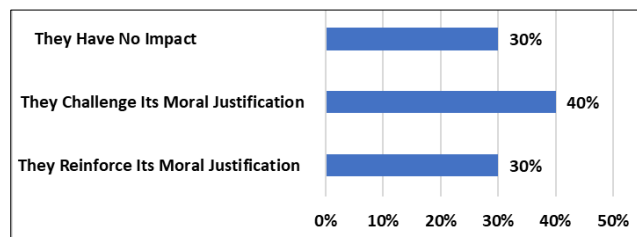

Fig 11: Impact of Societal Attitudes on Moral Acceptability

Figure 11 Impact of Societal Attitudes on Moral Acceptability

According to Figure 11, staffs are divided on how societal attitudes toward the death penalty impact its moral justification. Forty percent (8 individuals) believe that societal attitudes challenge its moral justification, while an equal 30% (6 individuals each) believe these attitudes either reinforce the death penalty's justification or have no impact. This split reflects differing perceptions of societal influence, which may inform staff members' personal and professional views on the legitimacy of the death penalty.
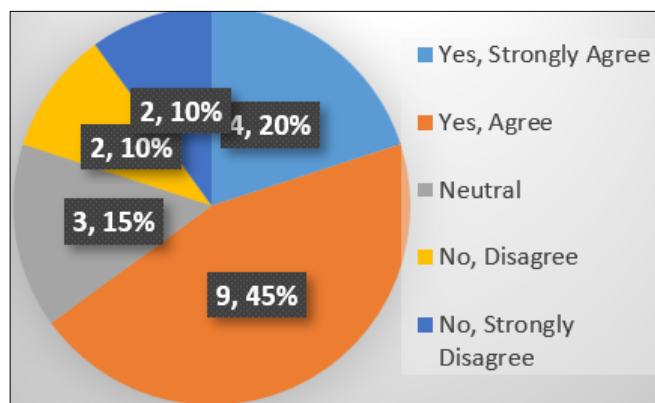

Fig 12: Alignment of Abolition with Moral Principles

Table 12 shows that 45% of staff (9 individuals) agree, and 20% (4 individuals) strongly agree, that abolishing the death penalty aligns better with moral principles and values. However, 10% (2 individuals) each disagree and strongly disagree, and 15% (3 individuals) remain neutral.

4.2. To Analyze the Broader Societal Views of the Community Around Mwembeshi Prisons on the Abolition of the Death Penalty Within the Local Community.
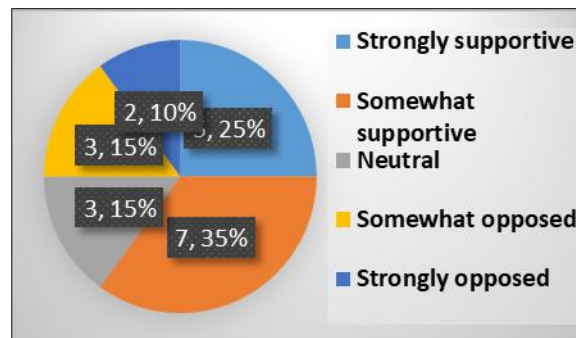

Fig 13: Perceived Public Opinion on Abolition

According to Figure 13, staff perceive a range of public opinions on the abolition of the death penalty. While 25% (5 individuals) believe the public is strongly supportive, another 35% (7 individuals) see the community as somewhat supportive. Conversely, 15% (3 individuals) believe the public is somewhat opposed, and 10% (2 individuals) perceive strong opposition. A neutral stance is reported by 15% (3 individuals).
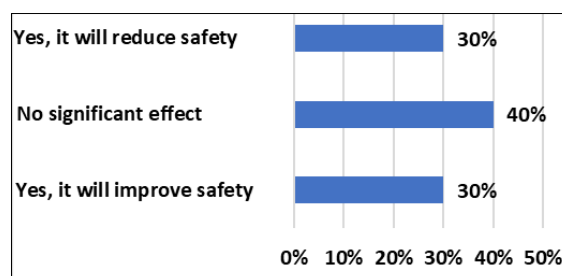

Fig 14: Perceptions on Public Safety Post-Abolition

In Figure 14, responses reveal mixed views on the long-term effects of abolition on public safety. Forty percent (8 individuals) foresee no significant effect, while 30% (6 individuals) believe it will improve safety, and another 30% (6 individuals) predict it will reduce safety.
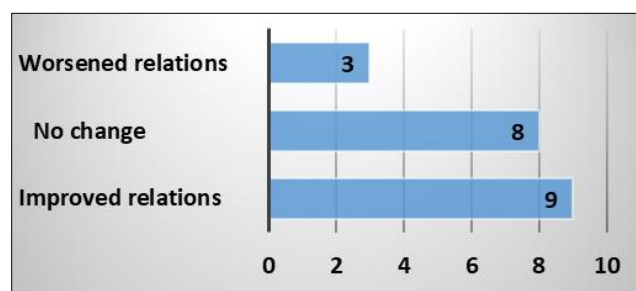

Fig 15: Changes in Community Relations with the Facility

Figure 15 reveals that 45% (9 individuals) of staff report improved community relations with the facility since the abolition, while 40% (8 individuals) have observed no change, and 15% (3 individuals) feel relations have worsened. These findings indicate that abolition may have contributed to a more positive relationship between the correctional facility and the local community, potentially due to shared values or an increased focus on humane practices.

4.3 To Establish the Perceptions of Inmates at Mwembeshi Correctional Facility Regarding the Abolition Of The Death Penalty.
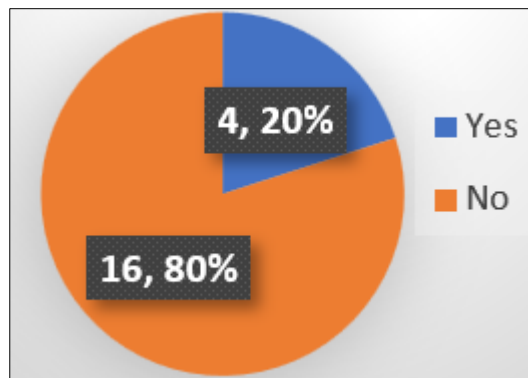
Fig 16: Awareness of the Death Penalty Abolition

As presented in Figure 16 a significant majority of the staff (80%, or 16 individuals) are aware that the death penalty has been abolished in Zambia, while 20% (4 individuals) are not aware of this change. This high level of awareness among staff members indicates a foundational understanding of the current legal landscape and may inform their perspectives on related issues within the correctional facility.
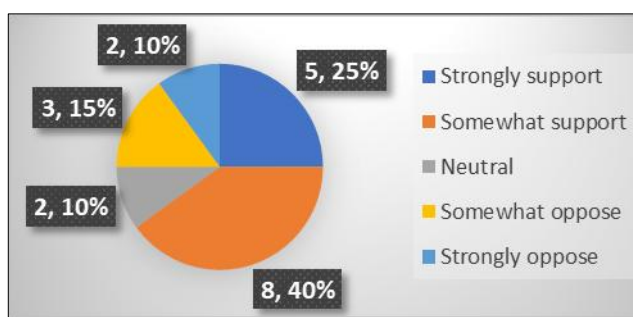

Fig 17: Support for the Abolition

Figure 17 reveals staff attitudes towards the abolition of the death penalty. The results show that 40% (8 individuals) somewhat support the abolition, while 25% (5 individuals) strongly support it. Conversely, 15% (3 individuals) somewhat oppose the abolition, and 10% (2 individuals) strongly oppose it. Notably, 10% (2 individuals) remain neutral. These findings suggest a majority support for the abolition, but also indicate a significant minority who hold opposing views, reflecting a diverse spectrum of opinions among the staff.
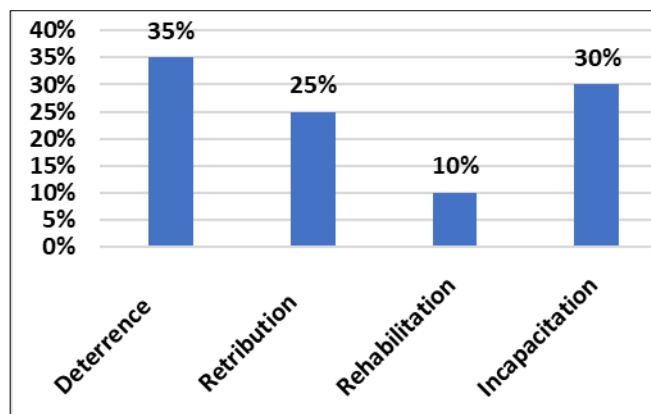

Fig 18: Perceived Purpose of the Death Penalty

In Figure 18, staff members were asked to identify the primary purpose of the death penalty. The most common

response was "deterrence," selected by 35% (7 individuals), followed closely by "incapacitation" at 30% (6 individuals). "Retribution" was indicated by 25% (5 individuals), while only 10% (2 individuals) cited "rehabilitation." This distribution illustrates that staff views the death penalty primarily as a tool for deterrence and incapacitation rather than a rehabilitative measure, which may influence their attitudes toward its abolition.
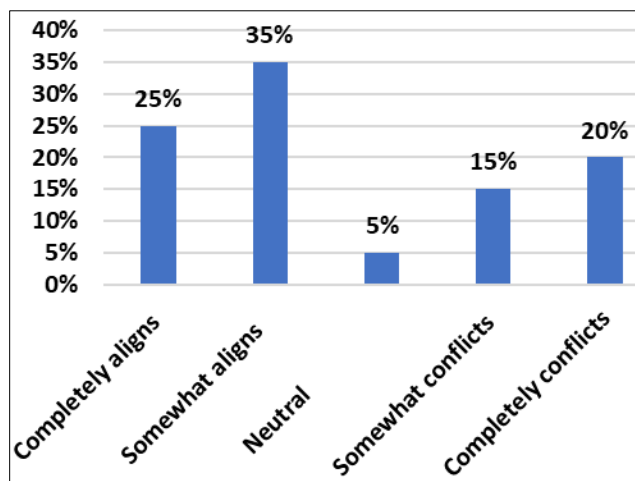

Fig 19: Alignment with Personal Morals and Ethics

In Figure 19, staff members were asked how the abolition of the death penalty aligns with their personal moral or ethical beliefs. A notable 35% (7 individuals) feel that the abolition somewhat aligns with their beliefs, while 25% (5 individuals) believe it completely aligns. However, 20% (4 individuals) feel that it completely conflicts with their ethics, and 15% (3 individuals) see it as somewhat conflicting.
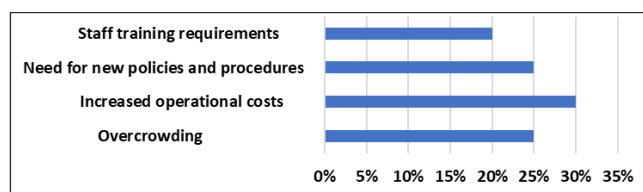

Fig 20: Impact on Perception of the Justice System

Figure 20 reveals how the abolition of the death penalty has affected staff perceptions of the justice system. The results indicate that 30% (6 individuals) believe their perception has significantly improved, and 35% (7 individuals) feel it has slightly improved. Conversely, 10% (2 individuals) report that their perception has significantly worsened, and 5% (1 individual) believe it has slightly worsened, with 20% (4 individuals) reporting no change.
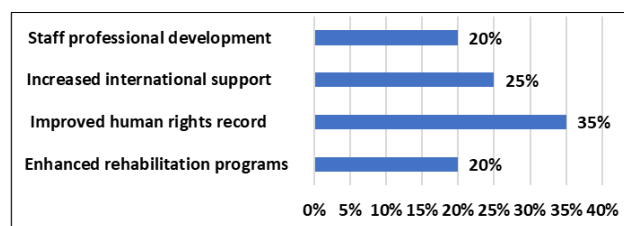

Fig 21: Main Challenges in the Correctional System Post-Abolition

Figure 21 outlines the key challenges identified by staff in the correctional system following the abolition of the death penalty. The most significant challenge is increased operational costs, reported by 30% (6 individuals), which may reflect the heightened financial demands associated with managing life sentences over long periods. Additionally, the need for new policies and procedures and issues related to overcrowding were each cited by 25% (5 individuals), while 20% (4 individuals) pointed to staff training requirements.
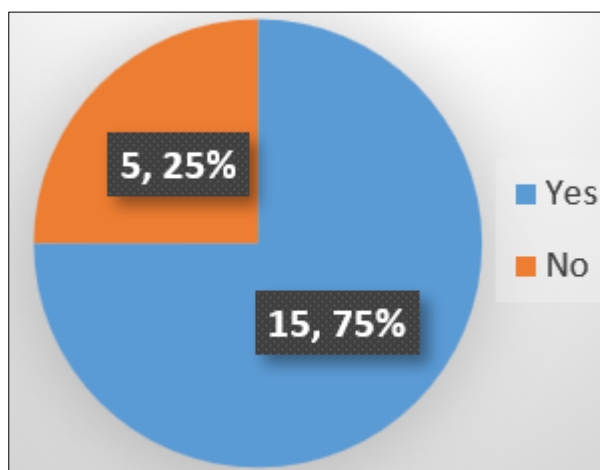

Fig 22: Opportunities for the Correctional System

In Figure 22, staff identified several opportunities presented by the abolition, with 35% (7 individuals) highlighting an improved human rights record as the most prominent benefit. This aligns with global trends emphasizing humane treatment and the protection of inmates' rights. Increased international support (25%, or 5 individuals) and enhanced rehabilitation programs (20%, or 4 individuals) were also noted as potential advantages, along with opportunities for staff professional development.

According to Figure 22 a significant 75% (15 individuals) of staff believe additional facilities are needed to accommodate inmates serving life sentences, while only 25% (5 individuals) do not see this as necessary. This consensus suggests that the existing infrastructure may be insufficient to meet the demands of longer sentences, prompting considerations for facility expansion or reallocation of resources to ensure adequate housing and care for long-term inmates

4.5 Discussion of Research Findings
The findings of this study indicate significant opposition to the death penalty among both community members and correctional staff, with approximately 70% expressing disapproval. This dual opposition reflects a growing trend in public sentiment influenced by ethical considerations, concerns about wrongful convictions, and doubts about the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent. Aligning with research by Gallup (2023), which reported declining support for the death penalty, this study underscores a broader societal shift toward more humane justice practices. Similarly, Smith and Jones (2022) [7] highlighted moral objections among correctional staff, mirroring the ethical concerns identified in this research.

Supporters of the death penalty, comprising about 30% of respondents, view it as a necessary public safety measure rooted in deterrence theory. However, empirical studies, such as Donohue and Wolfers (2006), challenge this claim, finding no significant correlation between capital punishment and reduced crime rates. Additionally, the American Civil Liberties Union (2020) raises concerns about the disproportionate application of the death penalty in marginalized communities, further questioning its role in enhancing public safety. This divergence in opinions illustrates the complex interplay between ethical considerations, public safety concerns, and personal beliefs.

Religious and moral principles significantly influence opposition to capital punishment. Many respondents align their views with ethical frameworks like utilitarianism, emphasizing the sanctity of life and human dignity. Religious teachings, particularly in Christianity and certain interpretations of Islam, advocate for forgiveness and rehabilitation over retribution. Peters (2020) highlights Christian values of mercy and redemption, contributing to widespread moral objections to the death penalty. This alignment of abolitionist views with ethical and religious principles underscores a broader societal move toward justice systems prioritizing rehabilitation and fairness over punitive measures.

Finally, the study highlights that 75% of respondents perceive the abolition of the death penalty as a positive shift for the justice system, reflecting improved public sentiment and confidence in criminal justice reforms. Comparisons with global trends, such as Zambia's formal removal of capital punishment in 2021, and findings from Radelet and Akers (1996), suggest that abolition often leads to more favorable perceptions of legal systems. These results have significant implications for policymakers, who can use this data to advance further reforms, focusing on fairness, rehabilitation, and equity within justice systems.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation
5.1 Conclusion
The findings of this research reveal significant opposition to the death penalty among both community members and correctional staff, with 70% disapproving of capital punishment. This shared perspective reflects a convergence of moral and ethical values, emphasizing the alignment of abolition with religious beliefs and human rights considerations. Conversely, 30% of respondents view the death penalty as a viable public safety measure, illustrating the complexity of societal attitudes toward capital punishment. This duality underscores the need for nuanced discussions on the implications of capital punishment for public policy and criminal justice.

The study also highlights the broader societal impact of abolishing the death penalty, with 75% of respondents noting improved perceptions of Zambia's justice system. Correctional staff face operational challenges such as overcrowding and resource constraints, prompting a shift from punitive to rehabilitative approaches. While the abolition represents progress toward humane justice, it also necessitates investments in infrastructure, training, and resources to support effective rehabilitation. Overall, the findings underscore the need for a balanced approach that embraces reform while addressing practical constraints, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable justice system.

5.2 Recommendation
To address challenges following the abolition of the death penalty, Zambia's correctional system should focus on three key areas: rehabilitation, staff training, and community

engagement. The government should invest in expanded rehabilitation and mental health services, including vocational training, counseling, and educational programs, to support inmates serving life sentences. Correctional management must strengthen staff training on rehabilitation techniques, mental health, conflict resolution, and human rights principles to enable effective inmate support. Additionally, fostering public trust through awareness campaigns, open forums, and outreach programs is vital. These measures will create a humane, sustainable correctional model aligned with modern justice standards.

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