

## Abstract

This study is an attempt to use discourses of popular literature in giving an insightful probe into the relationship between criminality and social set-ups as presented by John Kiggia Kimani in *Life and Times of a Bank Robber* (1988) and *Prison is not a Holiday Camp* (1994). The study sought to investigate the various levels of crime evident in both texts in relation to urban and prison set-ups, spaces that are portrayed as conducive for criminal activities. The focus of the study is that there is a positive relationship between increase in criminality and social set-ups. Technical devices that Kiggia uses to present the criminal figure and crime as a subversion of morality have been analyzed. In this study, three theories were considered appropriate. Narratology has been useful in analyzing the stylistic devices that Kiggia uses to bring out factors that have enhanced criminality increase in both texts. Since narratology was found deficient to address societal changes, Critical social theory and new historicism have been utilized to do an assessment of the society [social set-ups] and characters by interrogating how with changing time they too change. These two theories have been pertinent in assessing and criticizing both the urban and prison set-ups in terms of how they motivate criminality levels to rise. The three theories have been hardy in providing a lens to peer into the city and prison's underworld to get insight on activities practiced there which contribute to criminality growth. Qualitative research design was used to do a literary analysis of the content, by focusing on the characters' transition from innocence to hardboiled criminals. An exhaustive account of Kiggia's growth from an amateur pick pocket into a big-time robber, and how the social set-ups have contributed has been done. The study has established that criminality and social set-ups cannot be stopped from influencing each other. In addition, this study ascertained that crime and criminals are such ambivalent terms to define in the world of both texts. This is because, in a social set-up where those who purport to be the judges of morality do not uphold any moral values on their part, issues of (im) morality then become volatile. The study arrives at the conclusion that the texts embody a vision of social morality whereby criminality is taken as a subversion of morality, in other words criminality is a construction of the social set-ups. The study is a contribution to the place and definition of popular literature. There are other fields of interest in the works of John Kiggia, which have come up in the course of this study that could be pursued. For instance, one could examine how women in the texts offer themselves for representation or the relevance of Kiggia's texts to the contemporary problems. Also a comparative study on Kiggia's works with other urban crime writers or prison, criminality and power in both texts could be done.