

STATE OF REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

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Abstract

Rehabilitation programme is one of the primary goals of correctional centres. However, the problems of rehabilitation of inmates are a major social problem in almost all the security custodial services in Nigeria. The study is an assessed the state of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres. The study was anchored on the rehabilitation theory. Data collected for the study were from secondary sources. The findings revealed a mixed perception of rehabilitation programme functionality, with inmates viewing them as less effective while correctional officials considered them fairly functional. The study also identified challenges such as inadequate funding, limited facilities, insufficient trained personnel, and inconsistent implementation. The study concluded that there is a mixed perception about the functionality programmes among the members of the correctional community. Effective rehabilitation programmes promote accountability among correctional officials and ensure the efficient use of resources by correctional management. The study recommends that more attention and resources be channeled to the vocational training of the inmates, the study also recommended that inmates should serve their periods of sentence and there should be a committee set up to periodically supervise the activities and across the correctional centers regarding rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration programmes in Nigeria correctional centers. Furthermore, there is the need for urgent legislation on realistic correctional reforms and policies that would emphasize on eradicating corruption among the correctional officials.

Keywords: State, Rehabilitation Programmes, Correctional Centres, Nigeria

Introduction

The aim of establishing correctional institutions in all parts of the world including Nigeria is to provide reformation and rehabilitation services for those who have violated the laws of their society. The rehabilitation and reformation of offenders are the principal objectives of the correctional centre in modern societies. These programmes are meant primarily for the incarcerated individuals with the expectation that they will undergo adequate reformation and become law abiding members of the society once they are released (Agbonluae, 2013). Despite these noble objectives, most people still perceive the correctional centre as a place where those who violated the law are punished rather than corrected. This widespread perception is also evident in Nigeria, Ndukwe and Nwuzor, 2014). Thus, Ugwuoke (2010) observed that the state of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centers Service is obviously in a state of serious dilemma. This situation is essentially predicated on the perceived contradiction that is embedded in the country's penal philosophy which implies the country's policy that centers on the rationalization of punishment administered to offenders, though the Nigerian penal policy emphasizes the reformation and rehabilitation of offenders). Perhaps, this

plays a vital role in the ineffectiveness of the correctional institutions, especially in developing countries, such as Nigeria, (Aremu, 2015).

Over the years, Nigerian correctional centres have experienced various programmes initiated by the government. These include, The National Working Group on Prison Reform and Decongestion, the Inter-Ministerial Summit on the State of Remand Inmates in Nigeria's Prisons, Presidential Committee on Prison Reform and Rehabilitation, the Presidential Commission on the Reform of the Administration of Justice (PCRAJ), the Committee on the Harmonisation of Reports of Presidential Committees Working on Justice Sector Reform, etc (Opafunso & Adepoju, 2016). These reforms were expected to address the problem of congestion, overcrowding, improve the living conditions of inmates and ensure the proper rehabilitation of the inmates.

Though reformation and rehabilitation have been said to be the ultimate aim of the Nigerian Correctional Service, evidence suggests that this goal has not been attained in Nigeria. Inmates' welfare and rehabilitation continue to receive low priority. Omagbemi and Odunewu (2007) said that provisions made for qualitative and vocational education of inmates are inadequate. Obioha (2011) noted that the Nigerian correctional system is more punitive and dehumanizing than the supposed corrective assignment it should focus on. The same conclusion was reached by the World Prison Brief, (2023) that current facilities and programmes of the correctional centres are outdated, unsuitable, and irrelevant to the declared reformative and rehabilitation ideals and where available is of low quantity and quality.

Similarly, Ameh (2014) argued that one of the fundamental issues confronting correctional centre administrators today in Nigeria is the apparent lack of agreement as to what should be its aim in dealing with convicted offenders. The reality is that, despite the claims for the well-articulated administrative, reformative and rehabilitative programmes, Nigerian correctional centres have continued to remain more or less punitive centres. By extension, this affects the perception of the public and the inmates in particular on the function of the correctional centres. In Nigerian correctional centres, there are a number of factors that impedes the efficacy of the correctional programmes on the inmates and their ability to be successfully rehabilitated and reintegrated into the larger society (Aremu, 2015). Among the problems associated with correctional centres that can negatively affect the inmates' perception on its poor condition.

According to a report by the National Human Rights Commission (2023), Nigerian correctional centres are congested with infrastructural decay and inadequate recreational/vocational facilities. Other issues were the inmates' deplorable conditions of living. It should, however, be noted that the condition of correctional centres and the quality of service provided through correctional programmes shape the perception of the beneficiaries (inmates). As noted by Gibbs (1975), the effectiveness of correctional programmes and whether or not they rehabilitate offenders depend on the extent to which they are perceived by the inmates. The perception of convicted inmates is, therefore, essential for having insight regarding their interests on the aspects of the correctional programmes they perceive as useful while serving correctional terms and after their release. Their perception will equally provide an answer as to whether convicted inmates are interested in correctional programmes and perceive the programmes as useful or not.

The perception of the inmates on the correctional programmes they receive is an important aspect of correction and worth exploring, yet there are no ample studies on this particular subject even by indigenous researchers. Instead, some of the available literatures, focused more on the conditions of correctional centres (Esiri, 2016), the types of programmes (rather than the perception on these programmes by the inmates) provided to the inmates (Aremu, 2015); the legal rights of inmates (Madaki, 2011); correctional centre subculture (Adetula & Fatusin, 2010); historical perspectives on correctional centre in Nigeria (Ahire, 1990); correctional centre management (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001) etc. The need to study the state of rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria's

correctional centre is the main impetus for the conduct of the study. This is what set this study apart from the previous studies. It is therefore necessary to interrogate the state of rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria's correctional centre in order to ascertain, the nature of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres? what is the state of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres? how effective are the rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria correctional centres? And what are the challenges confronting rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres?

Conceptual Review

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is a concept with myriads of definitions arising from the fact that scholars define it according to the school of thought they belong to. The term "rehabilitation" connotes changing the defective behaviours of offenders of the law to an acceptable one. Rehabilitation is the transformation of the inmates into law abiding and productive citizens but it also sends the strong message that it can only be achieved through human punishment and compensating the offender through corrections Ugwuoke (2010). It is also predicated upon the belief that when rehabilitative, reformative and reintegration policies and programmes are effectively and meaningfully pursued and implemented for inmates under conducive conditions, there will be decrease or significant reduction in the rate of recidivism among inmates (Ekpenyong & Undutimi, 2016; Esiri, 2016). Rehabilitation is the processes involved in treating the offenders so as to integrate them back to the society. Awopetu (2014) posits that rehabilitation with specific reference to correctional rehabilitation means "bringing the offender to normal life". Thus, felons are condemned to correctional for the objective of re-integration after rehabilitation (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013). Similarly, rehabilitation can be defined as a procedure of returning a felon to normal life after violation of state or criminal law.

Ugwuoke and Ojunugwa (2014) attest that rehabilitation simply means the modification of a trait or character and actions of a convicted felon through a good educational scheme or corrective treatment, making sure that individual offenders are reverted back into the society as an accomplished, self-rooting and recognized member of the society. A different perspective is submitted by Carney (1980) who suggests that rehabilitation is the restoration to a former capacity. This can be achieved with the assistance of correctional officers. Furthermore, rehabilitation, according to Skidmore *et al* (1976), is believed to be sufficient when the entire process of providing an inmate with wisdom or intelligence, ability and finance that will ensure him or her secure a lawful living within the society, have been attained or exhausted and also, when the social and ethical criteria of the inmate have been elevated to a stage that permits him or her to endure the communal tension of returning to crime related acts. Based on the above assertions, and for the purpose of this current review, rehabilitation in this background is the entire procedure of making an inmate useful to him or herself and the wider society. This is through instilling her essential expertise and wisdom that will enable the inmate to recover his or her social functioning after regaining freedom. Giddens (1997), sums up rehabilitation of inmates as the organization of various programmes such as vocational, counselling, educational, aimed at reintegrating the ex-convict back into society.

Within the context of the study, rehabilitation is the transformation of the inmates into law abiding and productive citizens but it also sends the strong message that it can only be achieved through human punishment and compensating the offender through corrections. It is also predicated upon the belief that when rehabilitative, reformative and reintegration policies and programmes are effectively and meaningfully pursued and implemented for inmates under conducive conditions, there will be decrease or significant reduction in the rate of recidivism among inmates

Correctional Centre

The correctional centre is a closed and regimented institution where people who are convicted below life imprisonment and death penalty after trial are physically confined for rehabilitation so as to be law-abiding and acceptable human beings in the society upon release. It is also a place where crime

suspects awaiting trial are detained until the determination of their cases (Obioha, 2011). Above all, the correctional centre serves as a veritable agent of “socialization” an institution where detainees or inmates are undergoing reformation and rehabilitation so as to be law-abiding upon release, make their reintegration easy and possible and, more importantly, to deter them from relapsing into crime and criminality. Abba and Mbagwu (2016), described a correctional centre as a physical structure in a geographical location where a number of people living under highly specialized condition adjust to the alternatives presented to them by the unique kind of social environment. Similarly, Ogwuoke and Ameh (2014), conceived correctional centre as a place where people are highly secluded from the rest of the world with entirely new order of control. The above conceptualizations as advanced by scholars are limited towards an understanding that a correctional centre is a physical environment, and could be described geographically or spatially.

According to Ndukwe & Nwuzor (2014), correctional centre is a facility in which individuals are forcibly confined and denied a variety of freedoms under the authority of the state as a form of punishment. The most common function of correctional centre as a part of a criminal justice system, is a confined centre which individuals who are officially charged with or convicted of crimes are confined, until they are either brought to trial to determine their guilt or complete the period of incarceration they were sentenced to after being found guilty at their trial. A correctional centre is an institution designed to securely house people who have been convicted or are on awaiting trial. Correctional centre is a total institution or a place of residence and work, where a large number of like situated individuals are cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together, lead and enforce formally administered round of life. This new environment is expected to provide the inmates with particular opportunities of rethinking, stock taking and repentance from old ways (Omorogiuwa, 2014). Correctional centre to Ayuk, Emeka, and Omono (2013), is a place where inmates are confined with the intention of reforming, and rehabilitating them and ‘ensure that on discharge they abide by the dominant values of the polity’. For the purpose of the study, correctional centre is a confinement where convicted persons by the court of competent jurisdiction are kept for reformation, rehabilitation and final reintegration into the society. These individuals are known as inmates/inmates/offenders and are kept in custody on a short- or long-term basis.

Theoretical Framework

The study is positioned within the rehabilitation theory. Jean Hampton, the major adherent of this theory states that the aim of the penal system should be treatment and correction. The rehabilitation theory assumes that individuals are not inherently criminal and that offenders can be reformed and restored to productive lives where they contribute positively to their personal development and to society at large. This theory of punishment is based on the notion that punishment is inflicted on an offender so as to reform him/her, or rehabilitate them so as to make their re-integration into the society easier. Punishments that are in accordance with this theory are community service, probation orders and any punishment with a program guidance and after care towards the offender.

In addition, Siegel (2005:371) affirmed that rehabilitation embraces the notion that given the proper care and treatment, criminals can be changed into productive, law-abiding citizens. Influenced by the positivist criminology, the rehabilitation school suggests that people commit crime through no fault of their own. Instead, criminals themselves are product of social injustice; poverty and racism, these are responses to a society that has betrayed them and because of their disturbed and improvised upbringing, they may be suffering psychological problems and personality disturbances that further enhance their committing capacities.

The hallmark of this theory is the retraining of convict so that he/she can live an independent and lawful life on release. The view of this justice system is portrayed as a method for dispensing treatment to needy patients. Offenders are seen as people who, because they have failed to exercise self-control, need the help of the state to return to the right track. The application of this, to the study

is hinged on the rehabilitative perspective by Siegel (2005:371). This theory indeed captures the thrust of this study as it correlates the state of rehabilitation programme in correctional centre behind the treatment of the convict by “reforming the attitude and behaviour of offenders so that they will be able to feel guilt, repent and choose lawful means, in satisfying their needs (Dinitz & Dine, 1979). The hall mark of this theory as mentioned earlier is to reform the convict so that he can live an independent life which is lawful upon release. This theory advocates some cause of action, not just vocational training but also rehabilitation programmes designed to transform the mental setting of the offenders towards their perception of crime by inculcating the knowledge.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research approach based on a desk review design. Data were sourced entirely from secondary materials, including peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, official reports from government agencies, human rights organizations, and international bodies on correctional services in Nigeria. The study relied on documentary analysis to examine the nature, functionality, and challenges of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centers. The collected data were analyzed thematically through content analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, perceptions, and gaps related to rehabilitation practices and policy implementation.

Rehabilitation Programmes in the Nigerian Correctional Service

A study was conducted by Asokhia and Osumah (2013), to determine the status of reformation and rehabilitation services in Nigerian correctional centre in Edo State. A total of 147 respondents (prison inmates) were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The findings of the study showed that, though a majority of the respondents affirmed that programmes of reformation and rehabilitation were available in the prison, the provision for services needed for reformation and rehabilitation of prison inmates were inadequate, neglected and not compliant with international best practices. Accordingly, Ndukwe and Nwuzor (2014), conducted a survey to ascertaining the extent to which welfare services viz. reformation programmes were being administered in Abakaliki prison and the factors affecting it. The study adopted a combination of simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques to select a representative sample of 98 respondents who were administered with the structured questionnaire. The study discovered that Abakaliki prison was unable to meet minimum U.N standard in reformation and rehabilitation services because of congestion. There was a continuous use of bucket latrines which exposed inmates to health hazards. Also, there were out-dated equipment used in the reformation and rehabilitation programmes in the prison. Apart from inadequate funds, it was discovered that mismanagement of welfare funds exposed inmates to unhealthy situation, which resulted to epidemics and untimely deaths of the inmates.

A study by Amnesty International (2018), on the status of Nigeria correctional centres found Nigeria correctional centres to be overcrowded with cells that hosts several under-aged children and adults, convicted felons as well as first time offenders, who are lumped together to share the same dormitory. Many of these people actually committed environmental offences. Many are in jail for such simple offences as being framed for offending a policeman who picks such persons up, frames the charges, gets the inmate sent for remand and the files gets missing for three to six years.

Asokhia (2011), investigated rehabilitation services in Nigerian correctional centres in Edo state of Nigeria. The researcher adopted a survey research design. The participants were 147 prison inmates drawn from the six Nigerian correctional centres of Edo State. The method of data analysis was simple percentage. The study found that provision for rehabilitation services is still neglected and not in line with the international best practices compliance. Prison inmates of these correctional centres prefer one rehabilitation service to the other. The most preferred rehabilitation service is

recreational activity football. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that deliberate efforts should be made by the Federal Government and prison service providers to reform the Nigerian correctional centres, and make it standard with international best practice compliant. There is also the need to introduce more rehabilitation services, facilities and reformative programmes such as training inmates on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and giving adequate awareness programmes so as to rehabilitate prison inmates and stop recidivism. Nwokeoma et al. (2019), examined the efficacy of Prison-Based Cognitive Behavioural Rehabilitation Intervention (PCBRI) in mitigating violent sexual behaviours among sex offenders in Nigerian correctional facilities. The study involved 45 participants evaluated using the Compulsive Sexual Behaviour Inventory and Hypersexual Behaviour Inventory across three assessment periods. Results indicated that PCBRI significantly decreased violent sexual behaviours among Nigerian sex offenders, maintaining its effectiveness over a six-month follow-up period. Aliyu, Mustaffa, & Mohd, (2017), explored the role of education in the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates within Nigerian correctional facilities. The research was conducted at the Correctional Services in Keffi, Nasarawa State, involving a sample of 60 inmates from a population of 182. The findings revealed a deficiency in recreational education activities due to the outdated state of correctional facilities, hindering the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates. Aliyu (2018), examined the impact of prison correctional rehabilitation programs on inmate empowerment at Oke Kura prison. The study found that correctional rehabilitation programs play a crucial role in reintegrating inmates into society. However, scholarly studies indicate that rehabilitation programmes face challenges such as social rejection, post-release assimilation difficulties, poor programme continuity, inadequate training materials, and unfavourable learning environments, which negatively affect inmates' learning outcomes and skill application (Alemika, 2015; McNeill, 2012; Visher & Travis, 2011).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The correctional institutions are very necessary institutions in the modern era and the correctional centres (prisons) in particular plays a major role in this regard. This study therefore assessed the state of rehabilitation programme in Nigeria correctional centres. The essence was to ascertain the manner in which the inmates and correctional officials perceive the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration programmes in Nigeria correctional centres. The study concludes that there is a mixed perception about the functionality programmes among the members of the correctional community. While the inmates tend to perceive the programmes as less functional, the correctional officials tend to perceive the programmes as fairly functional. The study provides the following recommendations

- i. That vocational training is perceived as one of the most influential programmes of reformation and rehabilitation in the correctional centres; therefore, it is important that more attention and resources be channelled to the vocational training of the inmates while they serve their periods of sentence.
- ii. There should be a committee set up to periodically supervise the activities and across the correctional centres regarding rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration programmes in Nigeria correctional centres. This will help to ensure that the correctional officials perform their duties appropriately and to make sure that the resources provided for the programmes are utilized efficiently by the correctional management.
- iii. There is also the need for urgent legislation on realistic correctional reforms and policies that would emphasize on eradicating corruption among the correctional officials and increase in the budgetary allocations for the correctional centres. This would help to improve the right human resources needed for optimal reformation and rehabilitation of inmates and the provision of the required equipment for the reformation and rehabilitation programmes.

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