

Meeting the Unmet Needs of Inmates in Correctional Service Centres in South-Western Nigeria

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Abstract: A survey of inmates was used to determine the unmet needs of the living condition of inmates within the contexts in which they occur. Employing field methods from Medical Sociology and Law, the study made use of the collaboration of both disciplines for comprehensive understanding of the scenario. Its specific objectives encompassed: (1) To examine access and use of health facilities among the inmates; (2) To examine the effect of officers/warders attitude towards inmates; (3) To investigate the perception of the inmates towards the housing facilities in the centre and; (4) To investigate the feeding habit of the inmates.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the researchers made use of mixed-method, such qualitative methods as interviews were undertaken to complement survey research (quantitative). By adopting the above-explained inter-method triangulation, the study did not only ensure that the advantages of both methods were exploited but also fulfilled the basic purposes of research.

The sampling for this study was purposively random. The study sampled six correctional centres in order to generate representative data for the inmates in South Western Nigeria. A cross-section of inmates was selected as respondents, using a multi-stage random sampling technique. 200 questionnaires were administered. A semi structured (in-depth) interviews was conducted among the selected correctional centres respectively, to gain further insight on the living conditions of inmates, which the survey may not readily elicit.

Ethical issues in research on human subjects were given due consideration.

In the final analysis, qualitative data were analyzed using manual content analysis. In conclusion, suggestions were made to ameliorate the living conditions of inmates.

Key words: Inmates, Perception, Access and Use, Living Conditions

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I. INTRODUCTION

The place of rehabilitation services in the reformation and transformation of correctional or prison inmates have continued to be on the front burner of public discourse in recent time. The main aim of establishing the prison institution (otherwise known as correctional center in Nigeria) worldwide is to provide a formal rehabilitation and correctional facility for those who have violated the societal rules and regulations. However, over the years, the discourse as to which extent this maxim is true in practice has generated a lot of controversy.

Although inmates constitute only a small percentage at the global level, the challenges resulting from inmates falling under the provision of the penal system have prompted official and humanitarian bodies to consider inmate as vulnerable, which need particular measures that meet their specific needs. The psychosocial and health conditions of inmates may become worse due to lack of effective living condition in correctional centres. While it is not unlikely that some inmates often choose to have a positive change of attitude on their own, however, a number of inmates require relatively habitable living conditions and proper guidance to facilitate effective functioning and approved behaviour (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013).

According to the position of the Nigerian Prisons Services (2009), the prisons are allotted the dual functions of promoting the improvement and rehabilitation of offenders. Nevertheless, the living condition of inmates in the Nigerian Correctional Services is, to a large extent, a proximate determinant in their rehabilitation process. In other words, if the correctional service centres must fulfil the primary assignment or function to wish it was established, various programmes, practices, and interventions that will improve the living conditions of inmates must be put into consideration.

Various research works have been centered on the process of criminal justice systems and recidivistic nature of offenders with a lacuna in the area of the assessment of the living condition of inmates. Given the increasing local and global need for reintegration processes to revitalize inmates, this study therefore seeks to

assess the living condition of inmates using the correctional service Centres in South West Nigeria as case study. Besides, this study is charged with the quest to holistically investigate the living condition of inmates with a view to reduce lacuna in knowledge and understanding of various issues of inmates living condition and correctional services as a whole, which will invariably guarantee more valuable information for researchers and policy makers

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of the study is to investigate the unmet needs of the living conditions of inmates in Correctional Service Centres in south-west Nigeria and proffer possible way out of identified challenges. The specific objectives are:

- To examine access and use of health facilities among inmates.
- To examine the effect of officers/warders attitude towards inmates.
- To investigate the perception of the inmates towards the housing facilities in the Centre
- To investigate the feeding habit of the inmates

III. METHODOLOGY

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the researchers will make use of mixed-method, such qualitative methods as interviews will be undertaken to complement survey research (quantitative). By adopting the above-explained inter-method triangulation, the study did not only ensure that the advantages of both methods were exploited but also fulfil the basic purposes of research.

The sampling for the study was purposive. A cross-section of inmates was selected as respondents, using a multi-stage sampling technique and questionnaires were administered.

As regards the qualitative approach for the study, a semi structured (in-depth) interviews were conducted among workers in the selected facilities, to gain further insight on the living conditions of inmates, which the survey did not readily elicit.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The significant need for rehabilitation programmes in the transformation and restoration of inmates needs to be improved with adequate and impactful measures. In the course of this study, it was discovered that there are more of young youth inmates in the correctional services centres ranging from age 19 to 35 years which is about 67 per cent of the study population compare to aged inmates and of which 33 per cent of the total sample size are single, 24 per cent are married, 25 per cent are separated, 13 per cent are divorced and 5 per cent are widowed. In accordance to the statistics represented.

Findings also, shows the educational qualification of these inmates to be very low as the statistics indicates that 25 per cent are primary school certified, 61 per cent had their educational experience up to secondary school level, including those preparing for tertiary education, 13 per cent are tertiary students and 1per cent of others are postgraduates. It could be said that, due to poor educational background most of them may indulged in crime. As the occupational status of the respondent which indicates that 26 per cent are public servant, 10 per cent are trader, 7 per cent are farmers, 9 per cent are into craft, 11 per cent are skilled workers and 5 per cent are of the category of others, of which a large proportion are students or people with no job.

Further finding will show how well the correctional services centres has put in place possible, adequate and impactful measures in rehabilitating the inmates. We used a standard criterion of 2.5 to indicate effective rehabilitation measures of which mean values below or close to the criterion standard will be seen as not effective or impactful enough for the rehabilitation process and the reverse is the case. In the course of this study it was observed that environmental factors and conditions helps in the rehabilitation process of inmates, but in the case of our study area, our research findings statistically proves with a mean value of 2.55 which is on the average of the standard criterion of 2.5. This indicates that the correctional centres conditions are not adequately suitable for proper rehabilitation process of the inmates. It was also discovered that adequate rehabilitation programmes in correctional centres could assist inmates acquire suitable skills in order to promote prospect development as well as attitudinal and behavioural changes of the inmate's

Prison rehabilitation programmes could be helpful to inmates to ensure and promote their physical, mental-health, psychological, social, and economic potentials" (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1989; Nigerian Prisons Services, 2009; Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013). The correctional service centres in the South West Nigeria has not really done much in meeting up with this need, as revealed in the study. The implication of this is that the recreational activities set aside by the correctional service centres for the rehabilitation process of the inmates is not effectively functional or not effectively impactful in the rehabilitation process of the inmates.

This is in line with the submission of Tanimu (2010) who revealed that Recreational activities and facilities in correctional centres are limited and poor in quality. The recreational activities that convicts engage in depends on whether they are inside or outside their cells. When in their cells, convicts engage in games like draft, ludo and cards.

However, due to the shortage of these facilities, convicts have to take turns. But the approach adopted by the correctional service centres as social intervention services are to a large extent impactful towards the rehabilitation of the inmate. There is need for a better and advanced approach to be adopted for impactful rehabilitation process.

Besides, this new environment is expected to provide the prison inmates with particular opportunities of rethinking, stock taking and repentance from old ways (Omorogiuwa, 2014). But further findings show that the approach adopted by the correctional service centres in the South West Nigeria toward proper and adequate rehabilitation of the prison inmates is not efficient enough in preparing the inmates for life after incarceration as it was statically prove. This further affirms the postulation that correctional services/prisons in Nigeria have lost its rehabilitative, reformatory and re-integrative roles completely due to the absence of meaningful programme; staff inefficiency and corruption, lack of a clear separation system, overworked and under paid staff (Igbinovia, 2003). This implies that the approach adopted by the correctional service centres toward proper rehabilitation of the inmates is not efficient enough for preparing the inmates for life after incarceration.

Once in prison, discrimination and little or no access to healthy living persist. This implies that inmates could be denied access to balanced diet good housing condition. Due to the larger numbers of prisoners, the prisons are overcrowded thereby lacking basic resources and facilities, authorities often focus on the situation and needs of “privileged” inmates. As a result, fewer rehabilitation opportunities are available to few and those that do exist tend to be less varied and of poorer quality (Penal Reform International, 2019). The prisons are typically small; there may also be less financial resources and physical space available for libraries, classrooms and training workshops (Sarkin, 2008). This suggests that, the experiences of prison life differ for different category of inmates. For instance, despite the emergence of many new and innovative rehabilitation programmes for inmates, the opportunities available to them in many prisons is still heavily discriminating and gendered (Penal Reform International, 2019). For instance, a number of women are likely to have gender-specific medical requirements and need to have regular access to specialists in women’s healthcare.

Where women are incarcerated with men, they remain vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse from male prisoners, which in most cases the prison staffs cannot prevent and indeed, sometimes join (Sarkin, 2008). Igbinovia and Omorogiuwa (2019) assert that prison inmates that incorporate rehabilitation services during confinement are likely to gain skills that could provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities upon their release. The prisons services providers do not only identify the causes of the inmates’ anti-social behaviours, but ensures the path to reformation by impacting on their potentials and subsequent change unto social functioning (Omorogiuwa, 2014).

Findings also show that, the rehabilitation programmes on inmates were not very effective due to lack of fund, inadequacy of rehabilitation equipment, lack of trained personnel and lack of manpower and poor management of rehabilitation programmes among others. It was also revealed that correctional service centres have not adequately achieved their aims and set objectives according to the Nigerian Prison Act of 2001, which is to reform and rehabilitate offenders, unto useful or resourceful citizens. Therefore, rehabilitation programmes for inmates in the correctional service centres are not as effective as expected. This would enable social workers to embark on corrective actions where necessary.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusively, the research established that inmates in most of Nigerian correctional service centres do not have adequate access and use of health facilities. This is conceived as part of the treatment of offenders. It is a general belief among the inmates that they have no rights to qualitative healthcare.as part of punishment to cope with during their jail terms.

It was also observed that the attitude of the staffs of towards inmates is abusive and as such inmates become more unyielding to teaching on behavioural change as they figure themselves in another world that is antagonistic to socially acceptable norms and values of the larger society. The Nigerian correctional service centres is more of a punitive centre than being correctional as oppose to the intended purpose and scheme of the

prison world.

Besides, the housing facilities in most of the correctional homes are less habitable. Most of the facilities are overcrowded with limited access to basic needs of life; like clothing, water and electricity. The study also reveals that the foods provide is highly substandard in terms of quality and quantity.

This study therefore recommends that concerted effort should be geared toward meeting the unmet needs of the inmates in South-Western part of Nigeria and in the country as a whole. In other to achieve this, there is an urgent call to both governmental and non-governmental agencies to put up more effort and be more alive to their social and civic responsibilities and functions in other to establish social order at both micro and macro levels of society.

It is also recommended based on the findings of this research, that policy maker at all levels should formulate favourable and functional policy regarding the living conditions of inmates in accordance with global best practices.

Based on the outcome of this study, it is further recommended that authority of correctional service centres should design a scheme that will engender earning for inmates such that it will enhance their effective correctional, reintegration and rehabilitation into the society. A take-up grant or a proportion of the amount accrued should be handed over to inmate when due for release. This will help, a great deal, in resettlement of the ex-convicts with the skills acquired while in correctional centre.

Moreover, rehabilitation programmes should not be left in the hands of the correctional services officials alone. Social workers, amongst other help professionals should be fully involved in rehabilitation of inmates. Government should make provision for social workers to assist inmates with services after released from correctional centre. One of such service is after care services and also, they should consider a form of compulsory savings scheme for convicts involved in correctional services.

There is the need for more social work psychosocial intervention programmes especially among female inmates. Sensitization of families and communities in preparation for the reintegration of female inmates into the society and involving them in rehabilitation and development programmes is imperative. There is need for the establishment of a regulatory body enforcing healthy living condition for inmates in Nigeria in order to minimize cases of recidivists in particular and general crime rate as a whole in the society. By putting the above recommendations based on the findings, into consideration, it will provide and reinforce the primary and intended aim of rehabilitating function of the correctional service centres in the country.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict to disclose.

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