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REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN DELTA STATE: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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Abstract

This study investigated the rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres in Delta State. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study; a structured questionnaire was the instrument used in the collection of data for the study. Cluster, simple random and purposive sampling methods were adopted. Education, skill acquisition, agriculture, religion, recreation, and counseling were the type of rehabilitation programmes that inmates were involved in the correctional centres, and these programmes were mainly perceived as not effective. However, recreational and religious programmes were perceived as very effective in the Nigerian correctional centres in the study area. Also, the study found out that the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes was hindered by inadequate professionals, outdated equipment, inadequate funding, lack of monitoring of the programmes, corrupt welfare officials, indifference on the part of inmates, overcrowding/congestion, and outdated books/non-functional libraries. To mitigate the menace of the deteriorating rehabilitation programmes in the Nigerian correctional centres, the need for involvement of professional social workers, amongst other recommendations were made.

Keywords: Nigerian correctional centres, Rehabilitation programmes, Inmates, Delta state, Social work

Introduction

Nigeria's first Western-style correctional facilities were created in 1861, leading to the establishment of the Nigerian Prisons Service with the post-Independence passage of a national legislation in 1972 (Otuu & Shu, 2017). The Nigerian correctional centre is one of the institutions that have not been given needed attention and are yet to make appreciable effects on the welfare of the inmates (Adetula, Adetula & Fatusin, 2010). This is clear from the argument that the correctional system hardens inmates, subjecting them to horrible and degrading conditions that mute out punishments exceeding the crimes committed, thereby rendering the inmates emotionally and psychologically disorganised in an uncaring environment (Faloore, 2015). According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (1989), some of the specific objectives of rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons are to ensure effective management of crisis situation of the prison inmates, ensure an appropriate training for the prison inmates in order to reduce

dependency, and to promote the provision of adequate and accessible recreational and sporting facilities for the prison inmates. In other words, those who have fallen foul of the collective norms and laws of the society expressed in criminal laws, should be reformed or assisted to live a better life after their discharge (Ayuk, Owan & Ekok, 2013).

Human rights watchdogs have described correctional facilities conditions in Nigeria as harsh, appalling and damaging to the physical and mental health of the inmates (Amnesty International, 2008). This is because the correctional facilities are overstretched and overcrowded, with many holding three times their designated capacities (Duru, 2017). There are reports of Nigerian prison inmates sleeping two to a bed or on the floor in filthy cells, with poor sanitation, food and medication are in short supply (Amnesty International, 2008). Prison inmates are routinely tortured, beaten and abused and female inmates especially face the threat of rape (Amnesty International, 2008). Inmates have also been denied contact with families and friends unless they can afford to bribe prison guards (Amnesty International, 2008). Also, the correctional centres are underfunded and the small allocation for inmates' rehabilitation are sometimes diverted and embezzled by corrupt prison administrators, while offenders are left in crowded cells where they daily deteriorate socially, morally, psychologically and intellectually (Birabil & Harry, 2021).

The Nigerian correctional system has attracted the attention of scholars from various professions and disciplines to assess its operations. For instance, Birabil and Harry (2021) conducted a study on workers' perception of rehabilitation programmes on behaviour reformation of correctional inmates in Rivers State. The study reported that to a high extent education, religious, skill training, agricultural programme, recreation and counselling contributed to inmates behaviour reformation. However, religious programmes had the highest influence on behaviour reformation of offenders while agricultural programmes had the least contribution on inmates. The study concluded that the importance of inmates' behaviour reformation through rehabilitation programmes are essential component of any broad based correctional strategy that seeks to improve the wellbeing of individuals. Also, it was reported that inmates were rehabilitated during incarceration and were successfully reintegrated by adopting crime free lives upon release. This successful reintegration was possible because the entire process of rehabilitation encompasses a variety of methods to correct, re-educate, and restore the inmates' defective thought processes and behaviours (Gideon & Sung, 2011). Rehabilitation, as a correctional focus, is noteworthy because studies have discovered that rehabilitating inmates is significantly linked to lower recidivism rates (Milkman & Wanberg, 2007).

Contrarily, studies revealed that majority of America's prison population have little to no educational and/or occupational experiences, suffer from different forms of mental disorders, and have a variety of additional health-related problems (Baer, et al., 2006; Durose, Cooper, & Snyder, 2014). Similarly, Asokhia and Osumah (2013) revealed that rehabilitation services in Nigeria prisons in Edo State were still being neglected and not international best practices compliance, and that most of the prison inmates preferred rehabilitation service was recreational activity - football. Other studies

revealed that the rehabilitation programmes provided by the prison system is the library facilities, which was non-functional, the inmates were being fed once in a day and the only functional recreational facilities were a football pitch, mid-range industrial production training, and the major rehabilitation process they undergone was counselling. There was a continuous use of bucket latrines which exposed inmates to health hazards, outdated equipment was used in the reformation and rehabilitation programmes, and mismanagement of welfare funds. These studies also showed that correctional service congestion led to death and spread of infections through the toilets (Alamu & Makinde, 2019; Ndukwe & Nwuzor, 2014; Okiwe, Abu & Anele, 2020). Lack of attention on behavior modifying services, and poor socio-economic conditions in the country are also identified as factors militating against effective inmate rehabilitation and re-integration (Oyekunle, 2020).

In spite of the identified problems facing the correctional institution, its formation is predicated upon the belief that when rehabilitative, reformatory and reintegration policies and programmes are effectively implemented, there may be significant reduction in antisocial behaviours and regard for the dignity of labour (Ekpenyong & Undutimi, 2016; Esiri, 2016; Opafunso & Adepoju, 2016). The correctional system, from the available literature, is constrained by numerous factors, and continues to focus more on punitive approach, rather than rehabilitation which has made inmates/ex-convicts more dangerous criminals. However, rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres in Delta State and the role of social workers have not been assessed and discussed in the available literature. Therefore, this study sought to:

1. Identify the type of rehabilitation programmes of the Nigerian correctional centres that inmates were involved in Delta state.
2. Ascertain the level of effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes of Nigerian correctional centres in the study area.
3. Identify the rehabilitation programmes that are effective in the correctional centres in Delta State.
4. Find out the problem(s), if any, militating against the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes of correctional centres in Delta state.
5. Suggest factors that could further enhance the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes of correctional centres in the study area.

Methodology

A cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The design was considered suitable because it assisted the researcher to collect primary data from a sample through a structured questionnaire, which was administered using two trained research assistants. The study was conducted in Delta State, Nigeria. Delta state, located in the South-South geopolitical region of Nigeria, was created on the 27th of August 1991 out of the defunct Bendel State with a total of four medium correctional centres, namely: Agbor, Kwale, Oguashi-Uku Sapele, and Warri correctional centres. Using simple random sampling, by balloting, Sapele and Warri correctional centres were chosen for the study. The target population for this study comprised all the convicted male and

female inmates of the two selected correctional centres. There were 78 males and four (4) female convicted inmates in Sapele correctional centre, while Warri correctional centre had 89 male convicted inmates at period of this study. All the convicted inmates were purposively included in the study. Thus, resulting in a total sample size of 171 for this study. The rationale behind the use of this number was because rehabilitation programmes were meant for the convicted mail only and these happened to be the inmates undergoing rehabilitation programmes as at the time of this study. The Awaiting Trial Mails (ATMs) were excluded from the study because they do not have access to rehabilitation programmes in the selected correctional centres.

The analysis was based on 163 questionnaires that were completely filled and returned. The data collected using the questionnaires were carefully edited to ensure completeness, consistency and accuracy. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis, while in characterising the respondents, descriptive statistics such as percentages, the frequency tables were utilised.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents that are of interest for this study are: Gender, age, educational qualification marital status, and occupation. Details are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (n=163)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	159	97.6
Female	4	2.4
Age range (in Years)		
18 - 27	34	20.8
28 - 37	59	36.2
38 - 47	43	26.4
48 +	27	16.6
Marital status		
Single	44	27
Married	67	41.1
Ever married	52	31.9
Educational qualification		
No formal education	28	17.2
FSLC	36	22.1
WASC/SSCE	55	33.7
NCE/ND	27	16.6
HND/B.Sc. +	17	10.4

Occupation		
Student	34	20.9
Farmer	27	16.6
Trader	20	12.3
Artisan	29	17.8
Civil servant	11	6.7
Businessman/woman	17	10.4
Unemployed	25	15.3

The demographic characteristics of the population in Table 1 above show that there are 97.6 percent of the respondents were male and only 2.4 percent were females. Majority of the respondents (36.2%) were within the age range of 28 - 37 years. Most of them were married (41.1%). 17.2 percent of the respondents had no formal education, 22.1 percent had First Leaving Certificate, 33.7 percent had WASC/SSCE, 16.6 percent had NCE/ND, while 10.4 percent had HND/B.Sc. and above. 20.9 percent were students before conviction, 16.6 percent were farmers, 12.3 percent were traders and 17.8 percent were artisans, while 6.7 percent, 10.4 percent and 15.3 percent were civil servants, businessmen/women and unemployed respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by type of rehabilitation programme(s) they were involved (n=163)

Type of programme	Yes	No
Education	41 (25.2%)	122 (74.8%)
Skill acquisition	48 (29.4%)	115 (70.6%)
Agriculture	32 (19.6%)	131 (80.4%)
Religion	97 (59.5%)	66 (40.5%)
Recreation	142 (87.1%)	21 (12.9%)
Counseling	89 (54.6%)	74 (45.4%)

Table 2 indicates that 25.5 percent of the respondents agreed that education was the type of rehabilitation programme they were involved, 29.4 percent indicated skill acquisition, 19.6 agriculture, while 59.5 percent, majority of them (87.1%), and 54.6 percent scored religion, recreation and counseling respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by perceived level of effectiveness of rehabilitation programme(s) they were involved (n= 163)

Level of effectiveness	Yes	No
Very effective	37 (22.7%)	126 (77.3%)
Effective	41 (25.2%)	122 (74.8%)
Not effective	85 (52.1%)	78 (47.9%)

On level of effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes of the correctional centres, Table 3 above shows that only 22.7 percent of the respondents agreed that the

programmes were very effective, 25.2 percent said they were effective, while most of them (52.1%) indicated that the programmes were not effective.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by type of rehabilitation programme(s) that is very effective (n=37)

Type of programme	Yes	No
Education	7 (18.9%)	30 (81.1%)
Skill acquisition	9 (24.3%)	28 (75.7%)
Religion	23 (62.2%)	14 (37.8%)
Recreation	28 (75.7%)	9 (24.3%)
Counseling	18 (48.6%)	19 (51.4%)

Table 4 above shows that only 18.9 percent of the respondents said that educational programme was very effective, 24.3 percent, 62.2 percent indicated religious programme, majority of the respondents (75.7%) indicated recreation, while 48.6 percent said that it was counseling.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by perceived problems hindering the rehabilitation programmes from being very effective (n=126)

Response	Yes	No
Inadequate professionals	56 (44.4%)	70 (55.6%)
Outdated equipment	43 (34.1%)	83 (65.9%)
Inadequate funding	67 (53.2%)	59 (46.8%)
Lack of monitoring of the programmes	61 (48.4%)	65 (51.6%)
Corrupt welfare officials	44 (34.9%)	82 (65.1%)
Indifference on the part of inmates	21 (16.7%)	105 (83.3%)
Overcrowding/congestion	72 (57.1%)	54 (42.9%)
Outdated books/non-functional library	49 (38.9%)	77 (61.1%)

On the problems hindering the rehabilitation programmes of the correctional centres from being very effective, Table 5 above shows that 44.4 percent of the respondents agreed that it was due to inadequate professionals in the centres, 34.1 percent agreed on outdated equipment, and 53.2 percent said it was lack of monitoring of the programmes. Table 5 above also indicates that 34.9 percent believed that the programmes were not very effective due to corrupt welfare officials, whereas 16.7 percent, 57.1 percent, and 38.9 percent agreed that the problems were indifference on the part of inmates, overcrowding/congestion, and outdated books/non-functional libraries respectively. It could be seen that the major problem was overcrowding/congestion, followed by inadequate funding of the rehabilitation programmes.

Discussion

This study found out that education, skill acquisition, agriculture, religion, recreation, and counseling were the type of rehabilitation programmes that the inmates were involved in the correctional centres in the study area.

Also, this study found out that the rehabilitation programmes were not very effective. More than half, 85 (52.1%) of the respondents perceived the programmes as not effective. This was due to various factors, such as, inadequate professionals, outdated equipment, inadequate funding, and lack of monitoring of the programmes, corrupt welfare officials, indifference on the part of inmates, overcrowding /congestion, and outdated books/non T functional libraries. However, the few respondents, 37 (22.7%) who perceived the programmes as very effective believed that recreation (75.7%) was most effective, followed by religion with 62.2 percent. This finding is in line with previous studies which revealed that there was a continuous use of outdated facilities and equipment in the reformation and rehabilitation programmes, inadequate funds, mismanagement of welfare funds, and that correctional centre congestion led to death and spread of infections through their toilets (Alamu & Makinde, 2019; Ndukwe & Nwuzor, 2014; Okiwe, Abu & Anele, 2020). On the other hand, this finding contradicts Birabil and Harry (2021) who reported that to a high extent education, religious, skill training, agricultural programme, recreation and counselling contributed to inmates' behaviour reformation in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The Role of Social Workers

Social work profession adheres to principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and rehabilitative services, and as such, social workers in the correctional centres play various roles. Beulah & lango (2019) enumerate such roles to include:

- a. Educating the inmates about prison life and rules in prisons,
- b. Taking the case histories of the inmates (which is a task that social workers are skilled at and trained to do),
- c. Administering the mental status examination wherever required,
- d. Identifying emotional disturbances in the inmates and administering treatments for separation anxiety, phobias about the new environment and people, guilt feelings to be dealt with, and identifying suicidal ideations,
- e. Identifying inmates' medical problems. The social worker also identifies emotional disturbances such as guilt feelings, suicidal ideation, health and mental health problems that the inmates may have. Social workers assist under trial inmates to achieve speedy court cases, help them with speedy trial procedures and help apply for videoconferencing trials (Beulah & lango (2019). According to Roy (2018) other roles of the social workers in reducing recidivism in correctional or criminal justice include:
 1. Providing mental health and substance abuse counseling,
 2. Finding alternatives to incarceration, such as rehabilitation programmes for low-level offenders,
 3. Helping formerly incarcerated individuals negotiate successful re-entry into society,

4. Working with clients to change patterns of criminal behaviour,
5. Advocating for clients within the criminal justice system,
6. Advocating for policies that address both clients' interests and need for public safety,
7. Work in the areas of Parole Programme and Juvenile Courts, and
8. Working with communities to eliminate the root causes of criminality.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study investigated the rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres in Delta State. A cross sectional survey design was adopted for the study; a structured questionnaire was the instrument used in the collection of data for the study. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were adopted. Education, skill acquisition, agriculture, religion, recreation, and counselling were the type of rehabilitation programmes that inmates were involved in the correctional centres, and these programmes were mainly perceived as not effective. However, recreational and religious programmes were perceived as very effective in the Nigerian correctional centres in the study area.

Furthermore, the study found out that the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes was hindered by various factors, which include inadequate professionals, outdated equipment, inadequate funding, lack of monitoring of the programmes, corrupt welfare officials, indifference on the part of inmates, overcrowding/congestion, and outdated books/non-functional libraries. These problems that are hindering the Nigerian correctional centres from attaining its rehabilitative function have contributed more to hardening criminals, high rate of recidivism, and congestion in the correctional centres. The role of social workers in the correctional centres were discussed.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made, to mitigate the menace of the deteriorating rehabilitation programmes in the Nigerian correctional centres, particularly in Delta State:

1. There is need for involvement of professional social workers in the Nigerian correctional centres. This will further enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation and successful reintegration of discharged convicts into their various communities, thereby reducing recidivism and congestion in the Nigerian correctional centres.
2. The staff of Nigerian correctional centres should be given periodical seminars and training on capacity building based on roles and functions of modern correctional centres. This would change their orientation from punitive to rehabilitative services.
3. There is need for adequate funding of the rehabilitation programmes in the correctional centres. Also, the Nigerian government should formulate and strengthen policies that would help to checkmate corruption amongst the staff of the Nigerian correctional centres. This will help to reduce embezzlement and misappropriation of welfare funds, and also to equip the correctional centres with modern rehabilitation facilities. This would encourage convicts to acquire

one skill or the other, which they would rely on after their discharge from the correctional centres.

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