



Impact of Prison Conditions on Recidivism: A Case Study of Selected Correction Centres in Rivers State, Nigeria

Ene, Warikiente Robert

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
Federal University, Otuoke*

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ssjprds.v7.i1.13

Abstract

This research explores how prison conditions affect recidivism in Nigeria, particularly focusing on specific correctional institutions in Rivers State. Based on Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, which suggests that criminal conduct is acquired through interactions with others, this study investigates how the conditions in prisons promote the adoption of pro-criminal attitudes and behaviors. A mixed-methods approach is utilized, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analytical strategies. Findings indicate that overcrowding, insufficient correctional facilities, and negative prison associations significantly influence recidivism among offenders. A multiple linear regression analysis reveals that prison conditions collectively explain 7.6% of the variation in recidivism, with prison facilities showing a notable independent effect on recidivism rates. The study emphasizes that enhancing prison conditions, including the provision of sufficient facilities and appropriate inmate classification, is essential for lowering recidivism rates in Nigeria. The results carry significant implications for policymakers and corrections officials aiming to reform the Nigerian prison system and decrease recidivism rates.

Keywords: *Impact, Prison, Correctional Centres, Recidivism, Rivers State, Nigeria*

Corresponding Author: Ene, Warikiente Robert

Background to the Study

Crime is often viewed as a pervasive social issue, as criminal behavior has been a notable aspect of human society throughout history. Nonetheless, the severity of crime causation has raised concerns in recent times. This concern has led to the development of a variety of punitive systems, such as prisons and correctional facilities, aimed at addressing criminal offenses. The primary goal of the correctional system (prison) is to encourage offenders to feel remorse, offering them a chance to reflect on their actions and go through a rehabilitative process to emerge as improved individuals upon completing their sentences. Essentially, the fundamental purpose of establishing correctional institutions across the globe, including Nigeria, is to offer rehabilitation and correctional services for individuals who have breached societal rules and regulations. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of this principle has sparked considerable debate. Numerous instances indicate that correctional facilities often serve as breeding grounds for criminal behavior rather than rehabilitation centers, particularly in Nigeria (Obioha, 1995; Raimi & Samuel, 2018). This situation arises from specific social and cultural attributes inherent in correctional facilities and similar institutions that are absent in the broader community. The prison environment, with its distinct culture and lifestyle, has the potential to significantly alter the attitudes of inmates either positively or negatively, depending on their personal experiences, social networks, and relationships. The way of life within correctional institutions shapes the adaptation processes of the inmates. The unique culture of these facilities involves various forms of reevaluation of values and internalization (Obioha, 1995). As a result, when correctional centers fail to effectively rehabilitate convicted individuals, the likelihood of recidivism increases significantly.

Research has identified several factors contributing to the rise in recidivism rates. For instance, while Igbo and Ugwuoke (2003) attributed recidivism to societal negative perceptions toward former convicts and the stigmatization of prisoners, Ugwuoke (2010) highlighted a malfunctioning correctional system that, in his view, fosters the dissemination and exchange of criminal influences and ideas. Additionally, Chenube (2011) connected the uptick in recidivism to substance abuse, particularly alcohol and drugs, along with inadequate education and peer influence (Tenibiaje, 2013). Other studies have pointed to additional factors contributing to higher male recidivism rates, including marital status, the number of siblings or children, socio-economic status, ethnicity, family background, duration of prison sentences, and the nature of the crime (Abrifor, Atare, and Muoghotu, 2012). Further research has identified links between recidivism and factors such as job scarcity post-release (Meyers, 1984), low educational attainment and inconsistent employment history (Eisenberg, 1985), gender disparities (Abrifor et al., 2012), and inadequate reintegration of ex-prisoners after their release (Ugwuoke, 2013).

While the above studies have all contributed to knowledge on the issue of recidivism from different perspectives, they nevertheless concentrated more on factors that are external to the correctional centres as causes of the problem. This clearly shows insufficient knowledge about the internal circumstances that can increase recidivism in the country. Therefore, little research has been done in determining the role of internal conditions in correctional centres, such as inadequate rehabilitation facilities, congestion in correctional centre and unfavorable

prisoners' association, for example in exacerbating repeat offenses among perpetrators. This therefore suggests a gap in the existing literature and it is this lacuna in knowledge that this study wants to fill. In light of this, this study examines the impact of prison conditions on repeat offenses at selected correctional facilities in Rivers State, Nigeria. In the context of this research, the state of the correctional centre is measured by variables such as prison congestion, correctional facilities and criminal associations in correctional centres.

Review of Related Literature

In an increasingly competitive world with high rate of crimes, correctional centres are considered and perceived as facilities where individual offenders are reformed and rehabilitated to be law-abiding and acceptable human beings in the society after release. Based on this premise, the International Center for Prison Studies (ICPS) 2008 noted the ideal type and nature of modern standard correctional centres, which stipulate that male and female prisoners be housed in separate locations and that the modern correctional centres should be divided into wings. The modern correctional centres are expected to house, among other correctional facilities, a main entrance, a religious facility, educational facility, a gym, a health care centre or hospital, a segregation unit, safe cells for people under constant visual observation, a visiting section, a death row (for those awaiting execution), staff accommodation area, and services such as kitchens, industrial or agricultural plant and a recreational area (ICPS, 2008 cited in Otu, 2011). On the contrary, Nigeria is yet to implement both the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rule and the International Centre for Prison Studies. This is because all these functional facilities, we observed, are grossly lacking in our prisons.

Certain characteristics of inmates' institutional career adversely affect their adaptation to correctional centre and rehabilitation so as to be insulated against relapsing and facilitate easy reintegration into the outside world. These prison conditions include, among others, indiscriminate confinement of inmates irrespective of age, crime committed and state of health of inmates, age at onset, prison gang membership, overcrowding and paucity of or non-availability of the state-of-the-art rehabilitation programmes. This belief draws our attention to the way in which prison structures and processes (regimentation, deprivations, application of harsh prison rules and regulations, and dehumanisation of inmates, etc.) influence reaction to incarceration and reformation. In keeping with ICPS and UNSMR parlance, some scholars like Pollock (1986) and Mandaraka-Shephard (1986) are of the belief that inmates in institutions with stricter disciplinary and operational regimes that emphasize custody rather than treatment, and with physically harsher environments tend to display more deviant attitudes towards the institution, whereas those in more treatment-oriented and less bureaucratic institutions tend to form stronger group association and easy adaptation and rehabilitation.

On that score, the relevance, functions and nature of contemporary Nigerian correctional centres have been a subject of discussion among some scholars. An increasing number of concerned observers have raised fear on the inability of the Nigerian prison system to reform inmates and thus unable to deter reoffending or recidivism. For instance, Atere (2000) and

Oshodi (2010) stressed that the Nigerian prison system is characterised by a picture of hellish conditions: tortures, hunger, inhuman treatment, congestion, disease and premature death; and these conditions directly or indirectly encourage recidivism. Nigerian correctional centres generally seem to be one of the worst in the world. Our correctional centres are overcrowded with both convicted criminals and suspects awaiting trial. Otu (2011) and Ekpenyong, Raimi and Ekpenyong (2012) substantiated this observation when they described the Abakaliki correctional centres as appearing to have the worst conditions of all correctional centres in Nigeria. Abakaliki Correctional centre has the capacity to accommodate 387 inmates, both female and male, but currently has 871 inmates. Hence, the present study stands to argue that this ugly trend cuts across correctional centres in contemporary Nigeria, although with a slight deal of variation among them. Dambazau (2007) observed that inmates in Nigerian correctional centres are meted with punitive measures: they are poorly fed and clothed, and live in deplorable conditions that do not augur well for proper rehabilitation (with its consequent recidivism). Nigerian correctional centres are not designed for reformation but rather prisoners are used mainly for public works. The system is poorly run, although the prison conditions may vary from one correctional centre to another in the 'disorganisation, callousness and exploitation.' The Nigerian correctional centres look like 'a relic of abandoned civilization'.

The Nigerian correctional centres have a few things in common: congestion, dirt and inadequate medical and rehabilitation facilities. As a result, some inmates recidivate few months after their release while many of them fall sick and die before they are tried or during serving time (Okunola, 2002 cited in Alabi & Alabi, 2011; Amnesty International, 2008). The Nigeria Prisons Service Annual Report (NPSAR) records that the Nigerian prisons are filled with people whose human rights are systematically violated. The Report further revealed that 65 percent of the inmates in most of the Nigerian correctional centres are awaiting trial, a considerable number of them are too poor to be able to pay lawyers, and only one in seven of those awaiting trial has legal representation. Generally, Nigerian correctional centres do not fulfill the Minimum International Standard; inmates are locked up all day long, buckets are used as toilets in most cells, most of the inmates are denied visitors, there is overcrowding, and lack of food rich in nutrient (NPSAR, 2008 cited in Otu, 2011; Otu, Otu & Eteng, 2013).

Supporting the above painted-condition, available literature reveals that the size of Nigerian prison cells is rather small for the number of prisoners they now hold. For instance, the result of Iwarimie-Jaja's (2003) study reveals that 129 correctional centres in Nigeria play host to about 60, 000 inmates. This gross inadequacy of space has aborted the policy regulation of keeping lesser criminals away from the hardened ones. As a result of the increase in inmate take-in, there is an indiscriminate mixing of prisoners. This means that the nation's correctional centres are overstretched beyond their normal capacity. Nigeria has about 240 correctional centres spread across the 36 states, including Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, with the capacity of about 47,800 inmates. However, the total number of inmates in Nigerian correctional centres as at 2010 was put at about 85, 000 with highest number of them on awaiting trial, followed by recidivism offenders (Nigerian Prisons Service Annual Report, 2010 cited in Alabi & Alabi, 2011;).

The nature and conditions of Nigerian prisons encourage recidivism. The Nigerian correctional centres are overcrowded and both socially and physically disorganized thereby posing threat to the social, psychological and medical well-being of inmates therein. Otu, Otu and Eteng (2013) recapped that the “Nigerian correctional centres lack basic infrastructure and social amenities. The electrical power supply is very erratic. There are no recreational facilities and social support programmes are poorly and inadequately provided”. The overcrowding and other harsh conditions in Nigerian correctional centres with their concomitant effects are inimical to inmates' rehabilitation, and this regrettably does not guide released inmates against reoffending upon release or guarantees effective reintegration into the mainstream society. The fact remains that the present prison system in Nigeria was designed and constructed during the colonial era for different purposes than what the criminal justice system requires today. These conditions undoubtedly do not augur well for proper rehabilitation of inmates so as to insulate them from recidivating after release.

Chukwumerije (2012) submitted that after imprisonment-care, which is supposed to reduce the number of recidivists, is hampered by the inability of the correctional service to provide tools and funds for the discharging inmates to start their own trade. This author reviewed the report of the Prison Service Annual Report from 2000 through to the present to justify his claims. The report indicates that only 119 inmates could be given trade tools out of 6,183 inmates discharged during this period. And such is the parlous state of welfare care to inmates that the nation may continue to expend scarce fund to recycle ill-reformed criminals, who interact with first convicts, thereby neutralising any positive impact on the inmates. Chukwumerije further commented that discharging a hapless and helpless ex-convict without vocational skills and tools into the bareness and void of an uncaring and self-serving outside world is merely to create a stronger case for return to crime (recidivism). Thus, Cunneen and Luke (2007) conclude that recidivism research is a common method of measuring the effectiveness of various criminal justice programs and interventions, and that recidivism is a key overall performance indicator of the criminal justice system. It's no wonder that we did. Others report that the correctional centre with its correctional facilities is a school of crime and breeding ground for criminal socialisation and thus encourages recidivism (Giddens, 2006; Adetula & Fatusin, 2010; Alabi & Alabi, 2011; Obioha, 1995; Chukwudi, 2012; Tenibiaje, 2013; Raimi & Ene, 2019).

For physical / infrastructure facilities, there is good evidence that the federal government is spending money on budgets to ensure the improvement of physical / infrastructure facilities in correctional centres. However, prison inmates have not yet felt the effects of these efforts. The gardens of most correctional centres in Nigeria remain built by colonial masters. The roof has leaked, the walls have fallen apart, and there is no bedding for inmates to sleep. The descriptive dark walls and solitary cells described as "dehumanizing" by Soyinka (1972); Awolowo (1985); and Samuel and Raimi (2019) have not changed significantly to date. Amnesty International (2008: 49) presents the current state of Nigeria's prison infrastructure from a sample of 10 prison yards across the country. Due to colonial history, most of Nigeria's prison structures were built before 1960 (the year of Nigeria's independence). Until 2008, a brief analysis of the current situation (Amnesty International, 2008) shows that three out of ten sample prisons lacked medical facilities such as hospitals or clinics.

Similarly, some inmates, especially those in the pending court category, are still in the school age group, and despite some lacking a skills acquisition workshop, some have no school. Establishing a new skill development center in correctional centres and renovating existing ones did not have a significant positive impact on the lives of prisoners after being released from correctional centre. These skills are not just enough for some prisoners. The workshop is not functioning at optimal capacity. In addition, most of the training provided in the workshop seems only during periods of imprisonment, as many prisoners do not fit the occupational skills available. Thus, a major weakness and limitation of prison reforms from a human development perspective is the lack of educational facilities for those who want to continue their studies. Despite all the possibilities for them, there are instances where felony prisoners are still eager for higher education, as found in the gardens of Agoda correctional centre in Ibadan. This case justifies the need for a prison extra-moral education program. Obviously, there is no electricity, as well as means of communication, such as television and radio, to keep inmates abreast of what is happening outside the wall. To be precise, this information represents the unfortunate situation and surprises that still exist in Nigeria's prison system, despite the acclaimed reform program for over a decade.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Differential Association theory as a way of explaining recidivism in the study area. Differential-related theory was first presented by Sutherland in 1947, but has been modified several times. Two fundamental elements of Sutherland's theory are that the learning process itself and the learning content are important for understanding criminal activity (cited in Sutherland, 1947, Introduction to Criminology, 2003). Learning is defined as "habits and knowledge that develop as a result of an individual's experience in entering and adapting to the environment" (Vold & Bernard, 1986). Sutherland hypothesized that criminal activity was learned in intimate social groups, but that these groups might not be delinquent, and that criminal activity was acquired through such contacts (Sutherland, 1949). Criminal behavior is primarily learnt from close associates such as family and peers; through associations with people approval of illegal behavior, individuals may learn to become criminal themselves (Introduction to Criminology, 2003). This learnt behavior includes both the technical skills necessary to commit criminal acts and attitudes which are non-conformist and thus conducive to criminal activities (Hollin, 2002). It is important to note that Sutherland did not assume that all individuals who come into contact with criminals will become criminal themselves, though critics such as Vold suggested this. The core proposition of differential association theory is that an excess of criminogenic "definitions," as opposed to conformist "definitions", are conducive to criminal to criminality; alone is not enough to incite criminal behavior (Introduction to Criminology, 2003; Ogadi, Raimi, & Nwachukwu, 2012). As Sutherland states, Though criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since non-criminal behaviour is an expression of the same needs and values "(Sutherland, 1947 cited in Introduction to Criminology, 2003).

Sutherland and his associate Cressey reject the psychological assumption that criminals were somehow different to law abiding citizens; instead, they suggested learning how to commit crimes is the same as learning any other behavior (as cited in Introduction to Criminology,

2003). Underlying assumption of differential theory is that crime is “normal”, rather than “pathological”, as it is learned the same way as all other behaviors. Differential association theory may be reduced to the notion that individuals engage in criminal activities because they have associated with and absorbed pro-criminal definitions with greater frequency, duration, priority and intensity than with anti-criminal definitions (Sutherland, 1949 cited in Introduction to Criminology, 2003).

Within the framework of this theory, correctional centres in Nigeria contend with overcrowding resulting in indiscriminate confinement of criminals of different backgrounds. This gives room for interaction among inmates to the extent of exposing them to even the hardened criminals. In this way inmates associate with, learn and absorbed pro-criminal tendencies with greater frequency, duration, priority and intensity than with anti-criminal definitions. And when, the reformation or rehabilitation facilities and efforts in correctional centres are not sufficient to neutralize the influence from such setting, it leads to more propensity of inmates to relapse into criminality thereby frustrating the cardinal objectives of reformation and rehabilitation.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach within three correctional facilities in Rivers State—Port Harcourt Correctional Centre, Degema Correctional Centre, and Ahoada Correctional Centre—selected to reflect variations in security levels and inmate populations, all of which are significantly overcrowded relative to their designed capacities; the study population comprised 727 recidivists and 15 prison staff, from which a sample size of 393 inmates was derived using the Taro Yamane formula alongside the purposive inclusion of all staff for qualitative insights, while socio-demographic data indicated a predominance of young (≤ 28 years), male (72.9%), largely Christian (91.4%), and mostly single (55.4%) respondents, with the majority drawn from the Port Harcourt facility due to its maximum-security status; data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to inmates (361 valid responses retrieved) and Key Informant Interviews with prison warders, focusing on dimensions of prison conditions such as overcrowding, facility adequacy, hygiene, security, and their perceived influence on recidivism, thereby enabling both quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation of how correctional environments shape the likelihood of reoffending.

Results

Table 1: Mean & Standard Deviation Analysis of General Conditions in Correctional centres

Items	SD	D	UNC	A	SA	x	S.D.	Remarks
Satisfied with the size of inmates per room in the correctional centre	211 58.4%	98 27.1%	15 4.2%	22 6.1%	15 4.2%	1.70	1.077	Disagreed
The correctional facilities are overstretched given population of inmates	72 19.9%	41 11.4%	22 6.1%	216 59.8%	10 2.8%	3.11	1.236	Agreed
The hygiene needs of the inmates in terms of toiletry is adequately catered for	241 66.8%	82 22.7%	11 3.0%	15 4.2%	12 3.3%	1.55	0.980	Disagreed
The inmates are sure of their safety given the kind of security arrangement made available	56 15.5%	68 18.8%	15 4.2%	98 27.1	124 34.3%	3.46	1.500	Agreed
The general condition of the correctional centre is contagious enough to encourage an ex-convict to re-commit another crime	76 21.1%	44 12.2%	15 4.2%	60 16.6%	166 46.0%	3.54	1.638	Agreed
Weighted mean = 2.672, Min = 1, Max = 5, N = 361								

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, UNC = Uncertain, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, x = Means, S.D. = Std. Deviation

Source: Fieldwork

The data presented in Table 1 were a combined analysis from the three correctional centres. Responses were rated as SD = Strongly Disagreed, D = Disagreed, UNC = Uncertain, SA = Strongly Agreed, A = Agreed. Values were awarded to the options as SD=2, D=3, U=1, A=4, and SA=5 giving rise to 2+3+1+4+5=15. The mean score was 3 (15/5=3); hence, by merging the score, analysis indicated that any mean score 3 and above connotes that respondents “agreed” to the variable statement, while any mean score below 3 indicated that respondents “disagreed” to the variable statement. However, noted that statements in negations were reversed during analysis for proper results. The Remarks shown in Table 4.2 reveals the overall opinion of the respondents (either they agreed or disagreed to the statement). The results show that “the general condition of the correctional centre is contagious enough to encourage an ex-convict to commit another crime again” (x = 4.54) was ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed in succession by “the inmates are sure of their safety given the kind of security arrangement made available” (x = 3.46), “the prison facilities are overstretched given population of inmates” (x = 3.11), “satisfied with the size of inmates per room in the prison” (x = 1.70), while the least was “the hygiene needs of the inmates in terms of toiletry is

adequately catered for” (x = 1.55). The qualitative findings shed more light on the quantitative results. They revealed that the general condition of the correctional centres was generally unsatisfactory and contributed to recidivism. The interviews revealed that the structural, personnel and operational problems faced by the correctional centres accounted for the poor condition of the correctional centre. In a key informant interview conducted with one of the prisons' staff, the Deputy Controller of Prison stated that:

Clearly, the general conditions of the prisons are largely unsatisfactory; a development that accounts significantly to the problem of recidivism. The relationship between the prison condition and recidivism became very pronounced and positive following structural, personnel and operational problems faced by the prisons ... (KII/Deputy Controller of Prison (DCP)/Port Harcourt Prison/2019)

The above assertion revealed that the personnel of the correctional centres are insufficient to reduce recidivism. More so, the structure and operation of the correctional centres service are below expectations. In an interview conducted with another prison staff, the interviewee indicated that the government had undertaken the right step by designing an appropriate policy framework that could improve the general condition of prison service but inadequate implementation of the framework contributed to poor condition of correctional centre and recidivism. In the interviewee statements:

Although, the government is credited with having a good and purposeful blue print or policy framework on how to realize a prison system or service in line with international standards to reduce recidivism..., the fact remains that lack of proper implementation has greatly frustrated her efforts in this regard. (KII/Superintendent of Prison (SP)/Ahoada Prison/2019).

The above indicates that the general condition of the correctional centres under studied is inappropriate to realize the three cardinal ingredients of correctional centre formation: reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration to curb recidivism. However, there are three independent variables used to measure prison condition in this study. They are the prison congestion, the correctional facilities and the criminal associations in the correctional centres. Below are the descriptive analyses on the three independent predictors to assess their influences on recidivism.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis showing Prison Condition (Joint Contribution of Prison Congestions, Prison Facilities and Criminal Associations) in Correctional Centre on Recidivism

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	S.E	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	39.669	4.203		9.438	.000	31.404	47.935
Prison Congestion	-.031	.031	-.056	-1.001	.318	-.091	.030
Correctional Facilities	-.211	.043	-.275	-4.923	.000	-.296	-.127
Criminal Association	-.463	.251	-.105	-1.842	.066	-.957	.031
Model Summary							
R	R Square		Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate		
.273	.076		.067		4.697		
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark	
Regression	633.564	3	211.188	9.575	.000	Sig.	
Residual	7874.436	357	22.057				
Total	8508.000	360					

Note: Dependent Variable: Recidivism; Significant at $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.01^{**}$, $p < 0.001^{***}$

Source: Fieldwork

Table 2: presents multiple linear regression analysis showing independent and joint contribution of prison congestions, correctional facilities and criminal associations in correctional centres on recidivism. The results show that prison congestions, prison facilities and criminal associations in correctional centres jointly predicted recidivism ($R = .273$, $R^2 = .076$, $F = 9.575$, $P < .05$). This implies that the three variables (prison congestions, prison facilities and criminal associations) jointly accounted for 7.6% variance in recidivism among the respondents. However, only prison facilities ($p = .000$) had significant independent prediction on recidivism. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis, and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant joint contribution of prisons conditions (prison congestion, prison facilities and criminal associations in prisons) on recidivism.

The qualitative findings shed more light on the quantitative findings. An interview conducted with one of the staffs of the correctional centres revealed that prison facilities play important role in recidivism. He noted that other variables such as prison congestions and criminal associations occur when prison facilities are insufficient to provide staff and inmates with needed requirements to transform and reintegrate inmates. In the interviewee's words:

It however stands to reason that to drastically reduce the number of recidivists in the prisons, serious attention must be shifted to facility provision or upgrade... This way, inmates are constantly supervised, monitored, trained

and motivated to imbibe the right moral values and skills needed to live a more sustainable life when eventually released from the prison. (KII/Deputy Controller of Prison / Port Harcourt / 2019)

The above depicts the importance of prison facilities in the struggle against recidivism. It signifies how the availability of prison facilities could go a long way in reducing recidivism among inmates.

Discussion of Findings

This study unravels the nexus between prison condition (prison congestion, prison facilities and criminal association) and recidivism in Rivers State Correctional Centres. The study found that prison congestions, prison facilities and criminal associations in correctional centres jointly predicted recidivism ($R=.273$, $R^2=.076$, $F=9.575$, $P<.05$). It revealed that the three variables (prison congestions, prison facilities and criminal associations) jointly accounted for 7.6% variance in recidivism among the respondents. This however, revealed that only prison facilities ($p=.000$) had significant independent prediction on recidivism. Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis, and accepted alternate hypothesis that there is a significant joint contribution of prisons conditions (prison congestion, prison facilities and criminal associations) on recidivism. This finding corroborates Dambazau (2007) observation that inmates in Nigerian correctional centres meted with punitive measures; they were poorly fed and clothed and living under deplorable conditions do not augur well for suitable rehabilitation with its resulting recidivism. This finding provides a strong justification for Sutherland Differential Association Theory that individual engages in criminal behavior because they have closely associated and absorbed the pro-criminal definitions with greater frequency, duration, priority and intensity than with anti-criminal behavior. The Nigeria correctional centres contend with overcrowding resulting in indiscriminate confinement of inmates of different backgrounds. This gives room for interaction among inmates to the extent of exposing them to the hardened ones, a condition that lead to recidivism.

The qualitative findings shed more light on quantitative findings. The interviews revealed that prison facilities play important role in recidivism. The study found other variables like prison congestions and criminal associations occur when prison facilities are insufficient to provide staff and inmates with needed requirements to transform and reintegrate inmates. The findings depict importance of prison facilities in struggle against recidivism. They revealed that availability of prison facilities could go a long way in reducing recidivism among inmates. This finding is consistent with NPSAR (2008) and Otu and Eteng (2013) study that Nigerian correctional centres do not fulfill Minimum International Standard; inmates were locked each day, buckets were used as toilets in some cells, most inmates are denied visitors, and there is overcrowding and lack of food rich with nutrient.

Conclusion

Based on this study findings, it was concluded that there is a significant joint contribution of prisons conditions (prison congestion, prison facilities and criminal associations) on recidivism ($R=.273$, $R^2=.076$, $F=9.575$, $P<.05$). Prison congestions, prison facilities and

criminal associations jointly accounted for 7.6% variance in recidivism, while prison facilities ($p=.000$) alone had significant independent prediction on recidivism. There is a significant joint contribution of prisons conditions (prison congestion, prison facilities and criminal associations), prison type and respondents' characteristics on recidivism ($R=.473$, $R^2=.224$, $F=10.088$, $P<.05$), but criminal association ($p=.001$) and education ($p=.001$) alone independently influence recidivism in the study correctional centres.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- i. Establishment of More Prisons:** Overpopulation for long remains a key problem faced by prisons in Nigeria. This has not only worsened the prison conditions in Nigeria but also frustrate rehabilitation efforts put forward by prison officials. The over-congestion problem has led to the over-stretching of little facilities available in the prisons. Therefore, to allow for proper reformation of inmates and reduce recidivism, there is the urgent need for more prisons to be established across the country. A situation whereby the prisons are currently lacking far beyond their capacity will obviously reduce the impact of any rehabilitation or reformation efforts. This can be achieved through partnerships with relevant international and indigenous organizations that fund correctional facilities across the world such as the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA), National Institute of Corrections, the World Bank's programme on Correction and Rehabilitation among others.
- ii. Proper Classification of Inmates:** It is very important that inmates are correctly categorized in view of the offences charged or convicted. This helps to ensure that there is no undue contamination of inmates as a result of close interactions. The idea of lumping inmates together recklessly must be discouraged and, in its place, a proper classification be initiated. Proper classification helps to checkmate or prevent unwarranted associations that could lead to recidivism. This can be achieved by classifying inmates into categories such as awaiting trial persons, first time offenders, convicted criminals, lifetime inmates etc., with separate cells and training programmes designated for each category.
- iii. The Role of the Judiciary:** The courts, together with the prisons and police form the criminal justice system in Nigeria. As such what affects one could directly or indirectly affect the others. In this regard, the judiciary should ensure that cases are given speedy hearing whenever they are brought to court. This is very necessary to reduce the huge number of awaiting trial inmates and thereby decongest the prisons (Iwarimie-Jaja & Raimi, 2019). Where this happens, adequate attention by way of reformation will be given to convicted inmates.
- iv. Upgrading of Vocational Training Centres:** The way the training centers are organized now, may not generate the desired outcome. In light of this, the vocational training centres need to be upgraded with qualified tutors or trainers as well as the relevant facilities. Above all, there is need for spatial expansion to accommodate more people as the current space is inadequate for the number of inmates in the selected prisons. Where this is not feasible, the training could be organized in sessions to ensure

for quality. To this end, the government and the organized private sector should focus adequate attention towards providing functional vocational facilities like workshops, photo studios, computer laboratories, saloons and many more.

- v. **Establishment of Schools:** The establishment of schools in prisons will help in re-directing the minds of inmates toward hard work and other positive values required for living a successful life. In this regard, a functional school system in the prisons will not only help in improving the skills of inmates but will also assist in increasing their level of enlightenment with a view to preventing recidivism.
- vi. **Establishment of Functional Welfare Department:** The welfare requirements of inmates are key and as such should be accorded the needed attention. However, the current way that welfare of inmates is managed also contributes to recidivism. In this regard, there is need to organize inmates' welfare into different levels for effective delivery. This can be done by having sub-welfare units such as vocational unit, education unit, funding unit, feeding unit and so on. All of these should be coordinated under a central welfare unit for efficiency. In fact, issues of skills development for inmates cannot be made possible without proper coordination coming from a very functional welfare system. Programs like the earn scheme which allows inmates to get stipends for engaging in vocational training or trade are all to be coordinated or supervised by the welfare unit. The welfare unit or department is also useful in the area of organizing after care programmes which happens to be a sensitive follow up initiative useful in monitoring the progress or successes of inmates even after their release from the prisons. Thus, it follows that a functional welfare system is germane in re-orienting inmates and keeping them away from engaging in recidivism.
- vii. **Recruitment of more qualified prison personnel:** Adequate recruitment is critical in realizing the goals or objectives of the prisons. There is the urgent need to recruit into the Nigerian prison service, persons with requisite knowledge and skills with a view to implementing or actualizing the policies and programmes of the service. This way, proper reformation, rehabilitation and integration of inmates will be achieved. However, where funding from government becomes a problem, an ad hoc recruitment plan where inmates who have served their time well and are considered to be worthy in character and training could be made to provide internship or short-term service to the prison for a stipend. This will serve the dual purpose of increasing manpower and also prepare the interns for life outside the prison and by extension reduce the potentials of further crime commission and recidivism.

References

- Abrifor, C. A., Atere, A. A., & Muoghalu, C. O. (2012). Gender differences, trend and pattern of recidivism among inmates in selected Nigeria prisons, *European Scientific Journal*, 8(24), 25-44
- Adetula, G. A., Adetula, A., & Fatusin, A. F. (2010). The prison subsystem culture: Its attitudinal effects on operatives, convicts and the free society. *Ifè Psychological*, 18(1), 232-251
- Alabi, T., & Alabi, S. O. (2011). The pains of imprisonment: A sociological analysis of the experiences of inmates in Illorin and Kirikiri prisons, *Journal of Research in Peace, Gender and Development*, 1(8), 235-241.
- Amnesty International (2008). *Nigeria: Prisoners' rights systematically flouted*, Amnesty International, AI Index: AFR 44/001/2008.
- Atere, A. (2000). *Life within the walls: A sociological analysis of prisoners in the South Western Nigeria. Doctoral thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.*
- Awolowo, O. (1985). *Adventure in power: My march through prison*, Ibadan: Macmillan Publishers.
- Chenube, O. (2011). A survey of alcohol vulnerability of male prison inmates in Nigeria, *Gender and Behaviour*, 9(2), 4298-4306.
- Chukwudi, F. (2012). Challenges of reforms in the Nigerian prison system: Lessons from the USA and South Africa, *Journal of Social Science and Public Policy*, 4(9), 35-46.
- Chukwumerije, U. (2012). *Explanatory memorandum on amendment of prison act*. Available online at: <http://www.Senatorchukwumerije/id63html>.
- Cunneen, C. & Luke, G. (2007). Recidivism and the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions: Juvenile offenders and post-release support, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 19(2), 198-210.
- Dambazau, A. B. (2007). *Criminology and criminal justice* (2nd ed.), Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Eisenberg, M., (1985). *Factors associated with recidivism*, Austin: Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles.
- Ekpenyong, N. S, Raimi, L. & Ekpenyong, A. S. (2012). Urban poverty and juvenile delinquency in Nigeria: Through the lens of Port Harcourt remand home inmates, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(8), 127-132, 2012.

- Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology (5th ed.)*, United Kingdom: Policy Press.
- Hollin, C. R. (2002). *Criminological psychology*. In M, Maguire, R. Morgan & Reiner (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of criminology* (3rd ed, Pp. 144-174). Oxford University Press, New York.
- Igbo, E. U. M. & Ugwuoke, C. U. (2003). Recidivism in Enugu state prison, *Nigeria Journal of Research and Production*, 3, 33-34.
- Introduction to Criminology (2003). *An appraisal of differential association theory*, Retrieved March 4, 2020, from https://www.jcu.edu.au_data/assets/pdf
- Iwarimie-Jaja, D. (2003). *Criminology: the study of crime* (3rd ed.), Owerri: Springfield Publishers.
- Iwarimie-Jaja, D. & Raimi, L. (2019). The criminal justice system as enablement for social order in Nigeria, *The Nigerian Journal of Sociology & Anthropology, Journal of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA)*, 17(1), 70-84.
- Mandaraka-Sheppard, A. (1986). *The dynamics of aggression in women's prisons in England*, Aldershot: Gower.
- Meyers, S. (1984). Do better wages reduce crime? *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 43, 191-196.
- Obioha E. E. (1995). *Prison culture in Nigeria: A study of life within Agodi Prison community, Ibadan. M.Sc Dissertation, Unpublished*, Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan.
- Oduyela, S. (2013). *Prisons of horror. Nigeria world*, Retrieved June 18, 2019, from <https://nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/oduyela/092303>.
- Raimi, L. & Ogadi, C. (2012). Industrialization and the problematic of agricultural production in Nigeria. *Knowledge Review: A Multidisciplinary Journal, NAFAK*, 26(2), 146-152, December, 2012.
- Raimi, L. & Ene, R. W. (2019). Intelligence failure and insecurity in Nigeria: An analysis of the Boko Haram insurgency, *International Journal of Strategic Research in Education, Technology & Humanities*, 7(1), 106-120.
- Olajide, F. (2014). *Hell is better than Nigerian Prison*. *Gong news*, Retrieved February 2, 2020, from www.gongnews.net/hell-is-better-than-nigerian-prisons-study.
- Oshodi, J. E. (2010). Nigerian prisoners: an open letter to Mr. President, *Next Newspaper*. P. 4.

- Otu, S. M. (2011). *Experiences and adjustment patterns of female inmates: a study of selected inmates in Abakaliki prisons in Enonyi State, Nigeria*. PhD dissertation. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
- Otu, S. E., Otu, S. M. & Eteng, J. M. (2013). Coping strategies and adjustment patterns among female inmates in a Nigerian prison, *Journal of the American Correctional Association*, 37 (3), 1-7/12.
- Pollock, J. M. (1986). *Sex and supervision: Guarding male and female inmates*, New York: Greenwood.
- Raimi, L. & Samuel, A. R. (2018). The relevance of informal crime management organizations in Kogi State, *Abuja Journal of Sociology*, 5(2), 401-422.
- Samuel, A. R. & Raimi, L. (2019). Governance and social order in traditional societies: Lessons for modern political institutions in Nigeria, *Social Sciences and Law Journal of Policy Review and Development Strategy*, 7(1), 100-113.
- Soyinka, W. (1972). *The man died: Prison notes*. London: Penguin Books.
- Sutherland, E. H. (1949), *White collar crime*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Tenibiaje, D.J. (2013). Educational attainment and peer group influence as predictors of recidivism. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(1), 30-37.
- Trotter, C. (1999). *Working with involuntary clients*, London, England: Sage Publication.
- Ugwuoke, K, A. (2013). *Released from prison and reintegration of prisoners: A case study of Akwa-Ibom*, An unpublished MSc Thesis submitted to the Postgraduate School, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
- Ugwuoke, C. U. (2010). *Criminology: Explaining crime in the Nigerian context*, Nsukka: Great AP Publishers.
- Vold, G. B., & Bernard, T. J. (1986). *Theoretical Criminology (3rd ed.)*, New York: Oxford University Press.