ISSN: 3043-467X



MAJOR FACTORS OF RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES IN KANO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper investigates the causes and implications of recidivism in Kano State, Nigeria with a view to further broaden the outlook of social welfare educator's contribution towards promoting the welfare of the inmates to prevent massive recidivism. The present nature of the facilities are punitive in nature not correctional. As such, this has led to high recidivism among the inmates. Instead of acquiring knowledge and skills that would make them independent, their stay leads them to getting trained by high risk criminals worsening their situation. The paper presents the various factors that lead to recidivism and the ways to prevent recidivism among the inmates in Kano State. Finally, the paper offers some suggestions which include the following: There is needs for community members to note that crime can occur at any time in the community, it is good for people to be vigilant always to prevent occurrences of criminal offences. There is needs for community members to note that inmates are part of the community and they will eventually come back to the community after serving their jail time. Therefore, there is need to show them concern and care. The Correctional officers should try their best to teach the inmates some skills that would help them to become more functional after their release.

Key words: Factors, Recidivism, Inmates, Correctional Facilities

Introduction

Prisons globally serve as correctional institutions, where officers, educators and volunteers worked for years on the belief that education not only provides hope for inmates but also serves as an avenue for change that reduces the likelihood of future crimes. The correctional educators working in correctional institutions and facilities aim to correct the behaviour of inmates. Such institutions include Remand Homes, Correctional Facilities, Reformatory, Boastal and other informal centers like "Gidan Mari" in Hausa-land. The society does not accept people that fail to comply with its rules, norms and regulations governing life. Perhaps that is why every society develops certain strategies or techniques for punishing such individuals as a means of correcting behaviour. The Correctional Facility is among such modern approaches for correcting, reforming and rehabilitating offenders.

The idea of this paper arises from empirical evidence of the correctional facilities inmate's data in which most of the inmates are recidivist or second time offenders (Andrew, 2010). The reason is that most Correctional facilities in Nigeria are over a hundred years old and were built with the intention of punishment not for corrections. Quite a number of facilities in Nigeria were built when the population of the Country was far less than a hundred million. Since then, there has been gradual increase in population with a corresponding growth in Socio-economic activities. This means that there is a corresponding increase in crime rate in the country. This is due to economic hardship and rampant cases of broken homes. Undoubtedly, this development has also led to increase in poverty, crime and criminality. The criminal justice system (CJS, 2019), notably the Judiciary and the Police in response, have continued to expand in leap and bounds but without any corresponding expansion in the facilities, which hold the product of these institutions. Thus the

few facilities built by the Colonial masters which are located in Kano, Lagos and Benin have never had any appreciable improvement and have became overwhelmed by population explosion among inmates. The infrastructural gap has become the bane of service delivery in the institution as obtainable in contemporary penal system even among developing nations. There is no gainsaying that the aim of imprisonment has shifted from punitive intent to correction driven (Nigerian Correctional Service Act, 2019). Correctional facilities are not supposed to be for punishment, but for corrections and rehabilitation. This indicates that facilities today are not for punishment, vengeance and victimization; they are meant to be places for corrections and rehabilitation, so that upon discharge, the person would not only be useful to himself, but to the society at large (NCS Act, 2019).

Other Sub-Sahara African (SSA) countries develop correctional facilities for the purpose of custody, deterrence and correcting the behavior of deviant individuals found guilty in order for them to become law-abiding citizens, self-productive and gain improved psycho-social functions. This is done with the ultimate goal of successful re-integration of the affected persons into their societies when released through the acquisition of knowledge and skills for self-productivity.

Before all these developments, different cultures and societies in Nigeria had different methods of treating offenders. These include banishment, hanging, poisoning and flogging. There was evidence that treatment similar to imprisonment was in use in almost all the societies in Nigeria. Typical examples could be found in Ogbeni House among the Yoruba, the Ewedo in the Edo Empire and Gidan Kaso/ Gidan Maza/ Gidan Yari in Hausa-land and empires. All these were done in order to maintain law and order in the area before the coming of the Europeans (Higgins, 2016).

Correctional education programmes are provided in all the correctional facilities in Nigeria purposely for training inmates to acquire knowledge, skills and competences, which enable the

individuals with self-reliance attitudes develop and be crime free. As a result of this, the facilities' authority introduced remission of sentence for those who participate fully in correctional education with reduction of 1/3 from the convicted time. This shows that correctional education is important to the inmates. This is the same with developed nations in which those who participate in correctional education have higher odds of being employed after release and re-integrate successfully in the community because they participated in the correctional education programmes.

However, with all these forms of correctional education programmes, the inmates are still committing similar or another crime and are re-sent to correctional facilities for the second or third time. This shows that prison correctional education programmes need to be looked into to ascertain correctional education programmes for the development of skills, knowledge, life skills, moral development of the inmates that can help to avoid recidivism (Beyco & Wong, 2005). Based on this, the paper investigates the causes and implications of Recidivism among inmates of correctional facilities in Kano State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Recidivism:

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2020), explains recidivism as the habitual relapse into crime. Recidivism is defined by the Criminal Justice System of the United States of America (2015) as an act of committing wrong doing or behavior unacceptable in society after warnings and corrective action have already occurred. The term recidivism can be used in identifying the real activities of correctional facilities and criminal behaviour. In the criminal justice context, this term can be defined

as a person who reverts to criminal behavior after being convicted and punished. In the criminal justice field, they commonly refer to repeat offenders as recidivists.

According to CJS-USA (2015) recidivism is closely correlated with the term "habitual offender". In the legal system, a habitual offender is a status usually given to a repeat felony offender. If a person has committed two or three previous felonies or numerous wrong doings, he may be labeled as a habitual offenders. These repeated felonies are termed recidivism and lead to the rise of the correctional facility population.

Recidivism has also been compared to psychopaths in the Criminal Justice System of American. Psychopaths are described as being unable to control impulses and antisocial behaviour causing the individual to repeat crimes. For an individual to be considered a recidivist, he must have undergone corrective actions for the previous crimes committed. These consequences come in the form of incarceration, or other sanctions such as community service and programmes which may include Adult Education programmes, Vocational skills, and counseling services.

Recidivism also refers to a return to incarceration in any penal institution after being released from such a facility. It can incorporate permanent re-incarceration, parole revocation, new convictions, and court ordered returns to facilities (Bahr, 2010). Recidivism is also interpreted by many in the criminal justice system as a failure rate, a clear reference to the argument that one of the key goals of incarceration is to rehabilitate offenders and thereby prevent them from reoffending and returning to custody. In essence, recidivism refers to a situation where by an individual is returned to custody after being released as a result of poor reception of correctional education programmes such as distance Adult education programme, vocational skills and counseling services at the facility.

Bales (2007) reported that in the United States, United Kingdom and African countries including Nigeria recidivism is quite high and within three years of release, more than 60 percent of former inmates are re-arrested. This has close link with poor application of correctional education programmes at facilities.

In the Nigerian context, the process of sentencing policies has been revised, to ensure speedy deposition of cases; developing a more efficient system of processing cases; improved treatment, vocational, and educational programmes within the custody system in order to reduce the cases of recidivism (CSP, 2019).

Reasons for Recidivism

A number of explanations for high recidivism rates have been offered. Evawoma (2020) suggests that for many decades, correctional observers did not give priority to the reality that offenders who re-enter society face a varied assortment of daunting challenges that predictably lead to high recidivism rates. Research conducted by Giordano & Schroeder, 2007 comments that, the data on recidivism and rearrested offenders affirms the significance of the problem, since educational programmes only in correctional facility do not prepare offenders for economic success upon release. They indicated further that, offenders are stripped of civil rights and are reluctantly absorbed into communities which leads to further alienation and isolation.

Lilly (2007) referred to many of the putative rehabilitation programmes as little more than efforts of correctional officers, consisting of treatment interventions that are based on existing knowledge of the causes of crime or existing knowledge of what programmes are known to change offenders' behaviour. Correctional officers are exacerbated by the fact that many habitual criminals present behaviours and traits that are predictive of re-offending such as anti-social values, poor self-control, inadequate self-management, a lack of pro-social problem-solving skills, and family

dysfunction (Lilly, 2007). Such individuals are unlikely to respond to the most common correctional education programmes that are offered in the facility. These include boot camps, educational programmes, vocational programmes, entrepreneurship training, and counseling services, among others.

Causes of Recidivism

There is no single known cause for individuals' return to a life of crime following imprisonment. However, some reasons for recidivism include the following:

Lack of socialization: This is a great factor that contributes to inmates recidivism in the community. Social interaction is very important to every human being because human beings are social animals that need to associate with each other, social interaction is very vital to human beings, whenever inmates were discharged from the facility and face challenges in reintegrating to the society. As such, they instantly prepare to go back to crime since the public withdraws them. The reasons given for successful reintegration were almost exclusively external. "Reintegration is attributed to the presence of alternative measures including support from the family and a social network, and getting a job" (Iudici Boccato & Faccio, 2018, p. 67). On the contrary, ordinary people and some prison officials agree that no matter how many opportunities for education and psychological treatment were given, it is inevitable that the detainees will return to their old criminal habits. This shows that everyone views reoffending differently even when given the same facts based off of personal experience and knowledge.

Empirical evidence released by Andrews & Dowden (2005) shows that most of the ex-convicts found it difficult to reintegrate to the society due to lack of socialization and that contributed a lot

to crime and recidivism. Some testify that due to rejection in the community they relocate to grave-yard and sleep, as a result of fear or total rejection in the society.

Lack of job training: A job is very important for human survival; it plays an important role in individual development. That is why correctional education is very important in correctional facilities. There is a great linkage between crime and poverty on one hand and job and wealth on the other hand. Therefore, job creation is very important to an ex-convict for his survival. Whenever ex-convicts have something to do, he can engage himself/herself from staying idle and also help to earn a living. This helps individuals to get employment and think of what to do to become self-reliant.

Inability to secure employment: Inability to obtain employment is another factor that causes recidivism among correctional facilities offenders. When they are released and join the community, the next thing is to get employed to earn a living, but whenever they are rejected from the employment, or they are totally rejected from the community, then they feel bad and may immediately try to go back to criminal activities as a result of lack of employment in the community.

Antisocial attitudes: Another factor for recidivism is antisocial attitude of the ex-convicts. Some of them have the problem of developing this behavior as a result of previous crimes committed in the community, they feel that people are still looking at them as criminals. Based on this, they develop antisocial behavior among members of the community and feel rejected. When they interact with people, they feel bad and attempt to introduce something bad to the community which can become threat to it. As such, antisocial behavior is very bad for ex-convicts and leads them back to crime and recidivism. A study shows that inmates who had a good working relationship with their correctional officer and who met regularly with them were less likely to recidivate than

those who did not. A good working relationship is defined as "deemphasizing the supervision aspect of a correctional officer's job, enabling the parole officers to focus on providing services to their clients and, as a result, change the underlying behavior of the offender" (Chamberlin, 2018, p. 3596). "Those who met with their correctional officer at least once a month were 47% less likely to recidivate than their counterparts" (p. 3591). These results were similar whether the interaction was face-to-face or a phone call meeting with the officer. For every one unit increase in a positive correctional officer relationship, there was a 34% decrease in the likelihood of recidivism (Chamberlin, 2018). An increase is determined on several factors including but not limited to how many times a month the incarcerated person meets with his/her correctional office in person, talks with them over the phone, and current gang affiliation (p. 3592).

Association with other criminals: Criminals always have gangs and feel free to associate with their mates always; therefore, association with criminals is another factor that makes an inmate to associate and learn more tactics from the experienced one. After discharge from the facility, they continue associating to commit other crimes because they have gotten trained for more complicated crimes in the community. As a results of this, they continue associating more with high profile criminals than other members of the community. Researches show that more experienced criminal have a way of training the young ones or non-experienced ones by showing them many ways of criminality and after discharge they develop more techniques for operation and change the behaviour (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

Lack of education: Education plays an important role in human development and lack of it can serve as a factor of recidivism among offenders of the correctional facility. Education provides good knowledge to individuals on how to socialize in the community and get involved in almost all useful things in the community. It plays an important role to the individual on what is good and

bad in the community, also teach individuals how to live successful in the community. This helps to re-integrate them to the community after the jail period. Therefore, lack of education is another factor that leads to recidivism among correctional facilities' inmates. The welfare branch of the facility supervises adult education in the correctional facility. Literate inmates are engaged or used to impart knowledge to others. Many inmates have passed FSLC OR GCE in correctional facilities over the years. Particular emphasis is placed on study groups and the creative arts such as music, drama and literature. These help inmates to avoid mental stagnation and open a world of knowledge (Willis & Grace, 2008).

Lack of support: Support is very important to every individual in the community whether able or disable. Support is very important to human beings; it fosters a sense of belonging among the members of the community, whenever there is support among members of the family, friends or community, people would believe in one society and improve relations. Bonta & Andrew (2013) suggested that support is very important in connecting inmates to the society; whenever an individual enjoys support from the community, he would really believe that he/she is part of the community and belongs to the community.

Substance abuse: Substance abuse among the members of the community plays an important role in crime involvement and most of the convicts are involved in drug abuse which leads to change of behavior in the community. Studies show that drugs play an important role in committing crimes and there are strong linkages between substance abuse and crime in the society. Indeed, substance taking leads to committing crime in the community (Beyco & Wong, 2015). They hold that there are likely to be a number of factors which contribute to the substance abuse and risk management approach to engage clients in rehabilitation to avoid recidivism.

Neglect or abuse of parents or guardians: Every individual needs care and self-belonging in the society, especially from the parents and guardians. When an incidence of crime occurs in the first place, there is need for the parents and relatives of the offender to show concern and self-belonging. Instead of this, the parent and guardians neglect the person because of his involvement in criminal activities. This leads the person back to criminality because the family and close relatives shun him from every activity. Similarly growing up with an absent parent can be extremely devastating to a child, and their feelings of anger and sadness are often internalized and can manifest in delinquent behaviour (Turner, 2014). Children and adolescents have trouble expressing themselves with words, so they use actions such as truancy, gang affiliation, and criminal activity, drug use, running away and becoming increasingly defiant. This behaviour puts these children at a higher risk of experiencing more victimization, such as sexual assault, maltreatment and witnessing family violence (Patterson, 2012). The single parent who is raising the child is often forced to work long hours in order to support the family financially and is not aware of their child's behaviour and cannot advocate or protect them effectively. Poor family functioning may be attributed to the absence of a parent due to incarceration, addiction, abuse, mental illness or death. Children who grow up in families where the father is incarcerated are five to six times more likely to be incarcerated than those whose parents were not incarcerated (Carney & Buttel, 2013). Family acceptance and encouragement is also directly related to an ex-convict's successful re-entry (Naser & Visher, 2016). Often time see a person's incarceration brings their family shame, and it is difficult to overcome that. In society's opinion, incarceration is considered taboo and seldom elicits sympathy and support from others.

Factors to Reduce Recidivism

The process of engaging individuals in efforts to change their criminal attitudes and dispositions can be viewed as a normative (i.e., value-laden) and capacity building process which primarily focuses on assisting them to construct personally meaningful and socially acceptable identities (Laws & Ward, 2011; Losel, 2010; Ward & Laws, 2010). The normative component of rehabilitation is evident in a number of ways:

1. The concept of an offender is a moral one, where individuals have been judged to have acted wrongly and illegally, and are punished accordingly;

2. In order to be able to pursue a meaningful life, individuals must be able to identify what they find truly valuable and construct ways of living which will help them achieve outcomes, activities and traits which reflect their identified values;

3. Risk reduction is usually a priority for all correctional programmes and intervention efforts, but it is value-la concept in the sense that the aim is to reduce, manage and monitor possible negative outcomes for the community and offenders.

Additionally, among the factors to reduce recidivism is vocational education programmes which is the most effective in reducing the recidivism of offenders. This can be attributed to the high interest among offenders. It could also be a reflection of the offenders' disdain towards education and the negative effect it has had on the inmates during their earlier years. Whatever the reason, education has an influence on both crime and recidivism rates (Coley & Barton, 2016). Those who have an adequate academic foundation are less likely to engage in criminal activity and those who participate in the programmes while incarcerated have a higher chance of staying out of correctional facilities. They also gain the skills needed to obtain a job which will increase their

self-esteem, create more opportunities and allow them to be active members of their community (Vacca, 2014). Individuals, who engage in criminal activities and become incarcerated often come from an inadequate family system with poor family functioning and processes (Garbarino & Sherman, 2000). Families such as these often have a difficult time adapting and have low levels of cohesion. Lack of adaptation among a family unit often leads to poor communication which can result in inappropriate assertiveness, lack of problem-solving skills, and decreased use of reasoning.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper discusses the major factors of Recidivism among inmates of correctional facilities in Kano State, Nigeria, in which a background of the correctional centers and recidivism were reviewed and the paper extensively pointed out many factors that lead to recidivism among the inmates. The paper also highlighted what to do to prevent recidivism among inmates in order for them to become functional in the society. Lastly the paper highlights some factors that reduce recidivism among correctional facilities' inmates.

Suggestions

The paper suggests as follows:

1. There is need for community members to note that crime can occur at any time in the community, it is good for people to be vigilant always.
2. There is needs for community members to note that inmates are part of the community and they would come back to community after serving their jail time. As such, there is need to show them concern and care.

3. The Correctional officers should try their best to teach the inmates some skills that would help them to become functional after their release.

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