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PERCEPTIONS OF INMATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMMES ON BASIC LITERACY EDUCATION IN THE CUSTODIES IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the perceptions of prison inmates on the implementation of basic literacy education programmes in the custodies in Imo State. A research question and hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2,823 prison inmates in Imo State custodies. The proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 700 prison inmates. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Mean and t-test was employed to answer the research question. The findings of the study revealed that prison inmates perceived that basic literacy education programme were implemented in the custodies in Imo State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Nigerian Prison Service should foster and promote basic literacy education because it serves as the foundation on which all other forms of education rest. It was also recommended that NPS should enhance basic literacy education programme for inmates through provision of good learning environment, employing more qualified basic literacy education instructors among others.

Introduction
The security of a society is paramount for its existence or continuity. A state of pandemonium, fear and anxiety is detrimental to the progress of any country. For a society to engage in vibrant socio-economic activities, an atmosphere of peace and tranquility are

pre-requisites (Hagan, 2013; Obidiegwu&Elekwa, 2020). Criminals constitute a major threat to peace and tranquility of any nation. Globally, criminal acts have constituted a major threat to livelihood and progress in all societies. Generally, in Nigeria and Imo State in particular, criminal activities are on the increase (Alozie2020). The authors further observed that there are cases of theft, armed robbery, rape, cultism, fraud, bandits kidnapping and Boko Haram insurgency, particularly in the Northern part of the country.

In the South Eastern States of Nigeria and Imo State in particular, there have been issues of crimes and insecurity. Alozie (2018) asserted that the security situations in Imo State is getting worse daily. According to Alozie, cultists, armed robbery, kidnapping, assassinations, among others, are the order of the day leaving citizens in fear. These crises, therefore call for the need for government and relevant stakeholders in Nigeria to ensure the provision of a crime free environment for her citizens. In an attempt to provide a crime-free environment, in Nigeria, government at all levels have tried to maintain law and order through institutions such as the police, armed forces, navy and the prisons. The focus of this paper is on prisons as a correctional institution for maintaining security, law and order in the society.

Security is seen as a collective responsibility. The Nigeria Prison Service plays a major role in ensuring the welfare and security of Nigerians through provision of correctional services to prison inmates. Prisons facilities have a peculiar way of contributing their quota to the preservation and promotion of peaceful environment in any society. Globally prisons are set up by law to provide restraint and custody of individuals accused or convicted for crimes by the State. According to Obioha (2011), a prison is a physical structure in a geographical location where a number of people living under highly specialized condition adjust to the alternatives presented to them by the unique kind of social environment. Similarly, Ndukwe and Nwuzor (2014) defined a prison as a correctional institution where an offender, or those awaiting trials, are securely housed and given some sort of training while in confinement to prepare them for reintegration into larger society on release. A prison can therefore be seen as a place where people are physically confined for committing a crime.

In Imo State, the NPS operational power of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 otherwise known as CAP laws (Act. Chapter 366) are operative in the custodies at Owerri and Okigwe. Information showed that inmates in Owerri totaled 2,308 (as at the time the record was taken in 2018), only 10% (230.8) of them were convicted inmates, five of the inmates were serving life sentence while the remaining 90% (2,077.2) of the inmates were awaiting trial (DSP Nwokoye Henry, personal communication, August 17th, 2018). Interaction by the researchers with the prison authorities revealed that inmates were offered rehabilitative programmes and services so that at the time of release, they will be reformed for usefulness to themselves and effective participation in the society. They are offered programmes such as basic literacy education, civic education, health education andskill acquisition prorammes such as tailoring/sewing, farming, barbing, computer training among others.

Among the listed programmes, basic literacy is a major driver in the rehabilitation of the inmates. This is because, it is the foundation on which other forms of educational programmes lie. It is the foundation for lifelong learning. Obidiegwu, 2013 maintains that basic literacy encompasses education which enables different categories of people to acquire basic knowledge which enables them to read, write and compute in order to be able to engage in useful activities as it relates to their lives

Similarly, American English Doctors (n.d.), viewed basic literacy as education which enables a person to read, without difficulty and with understanding, a non- fiction book or speak a standard form of the native language whenever required and write a simple coherent note or letter that conveys the person's thoughts. It emphasizes teaching of reading, writing and computations. The philosophy behind the adoption of basic literacy approach is that it helps recipients to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge which the person can apply for solving life problems. UNESCO in Ogbaka, Ewelum and Apiti (2017), suggests that the very process of learning to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used for improving standards. Basic literacy is popular among prison education practitioners. This is because of the belief that prison inmates should be helped to acquire reading, writing and computational skills that will help them

to be productive when they are acquitted. Most prison inmates are people who has poor reading, writing and computational skills, and are school drop- outs. Basic literacy programme is therefore necessary to help the inmates acquire skills (reading, writing and computational skills) and competencies that will make them to become better at the time of release and reduce the possibility of recidivism. British House of Commons (2004) reported that half of all the prisoners in the UK were at or below the level expected of an 11years old in reading, two-third in numeracy and fourth-fifth in writing.

Basic literacy education in custody involves facilitating reading, writing and computing skills of inmates and helping them to understand the importance of involvement in issues concerning their lives. Similarly, Obidiegwu and Obiozor (2015) opined that basic literacy encompasses early childhood and elementary education, as well as education in literacy and general knowledge for youths and adults which enable them to read, write and compute figures. In this instance the inmates are taught basic skills and the importance of living a balanced life by contributing to their families and societies.

In most African countries, no accurate data is available to ascertain the literacy and numeracy level of prison inmates. However, a literacy assessment conducted in Gulu Prison in Uganda revealed that over fifty percent of inmates/prisoners whose record showed that they had studied up to primary 5, could not read or write (Africa Prisons Project 2014). In Nigeria, there is no official statistics on literacy and numeracy level of prison inmates. However, studies by Stephens, (2012), Abriofor et al. (2012) and Tennibiaje (2013), found that most prison inmates in Nigeria are illiterates and can neither read nor write.

The consequences of low literacy and numeracy level for prison inmates are enormous. Low literacy and numeracy levels negatively impact the rehabilitation process. This viewpoint is corroborated by a study by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (2008), which showed that prison inmates with low literacy level were less likely to use prison services such as the community offices and social welfare services.This means that they might not benefit from rehabilitation programmes such as anger management training and drug rehabilitation, which can involve reading. A senior advisor of training for the Department of Corrections in New Zealand, stressed that lack of literacy and numeracy skills dramatically affects

the life of a prisoner and is a major barrier to educational achievement and finding sustainable jobs upon release (Department of Corrections 2013). Prison inmates who have low literacy and numeracy levels find it difficult to organize information, follow a line of reasoning and keeping track of set of instructions. In Uganda, prison inmates are not able to join vocational and rehabilitation programmes because of their low levels of literacy.

Rehabilitation in this study implies reformation of inmates' behaviour and personality through adequately planned educational programmes to enable them become better and responsible members of the society upon release. According to Cullen and Jonson (2011), rehabilitation is a planned correctional intervention which targets for change of behaviours or to restore inmates to their former reputation with the goal of reducing recidivism. This definition implies that criminals have tendencies to commit crimes. Hence, rehabilitation is aimed at identifying the negative behavioural factors in order to curb them so that inmates will be truly reformed after discharge from prison. This paper suggests that such rehabilitative education programmes should start at the foundation level through basic literacy. Cree, Andrew & Steward (2012) noted that prison inmates who are illiterates on release present high probability of recidivism and this involves considerable costs to any economy in terms of maintaining prisons, administering the courts and running the justice system. The importance of literacy and numeracy skills to prison inmates is evident however, several factors have been identified as impeding or frustrating implementation of literacy programmes in prisons. These factors, according to Natale (2010) include a general lack of incentives that encourage inmates to participate in learning, a lack of ICT andfavourable prison policy, among others. In another study, Clark (2008) highlighted a wide range of emotional, learning and/or attention deficit disorders as other factors that hamper literacy and numeracy among prison inmates. In their report on factors frustrating the implementation of the literacy programme for youths in conflict with the law in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Colenutt and Toye (2012), listed factors affecting the implementation of literacy and numeracy programme in prisons to include removal from family, community and school, disruptive institutional routines, inadequate resources, emotional and

behavioral disorders, and uncoordinated efforts by multiple agencies.

The respondents for this study were male and female prison inmates who may differ in their responses on the implementation of rehabilitative programmes on basic literacy education in the custodies in Imo State. They may differ in their opinion because different gender has different perspectives to issues particularly in a patriarchal society such as Nigeria where women seems to be marginalized.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, little attention is paid to inmates in custodies in Nigeria, hence, dearth of available data on prison education and rehabilitation of inmates. Since education is known globally as a weapon for inculcating positive change in various groups of people. The researchers deem it necessary that prison education should begin at the foundational level, hence, the need to embark on this study to find out the perceptions of inmates on the implementation of rehabilitative programmes on basic literacy education in the custodies in Imo State so that empirical evidence on the impression, understanding and thoughts of the inmates in Imo State custodies on the rehabilitative programmes (Basic Literacy) will be elicited for evidence-based decision making, proper planning and policy making in the interest of the inmates, NPS and the entire society. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the perceptions of prison inmates on:

1. The implementation of basic literacy programme in the custodies in Imo State

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the perceptions of prison inmates on the implementation of basic literacy programme in the custodies in Imo State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female prison inmates on their perceptions of the implementation of basic literacy programmes in the custodies in Imo State.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Imo State.

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The population of this study comprised 2,823 (2,308 in Owerri& 515 in Okigwe) prison inmates in Imo State. Information collected by the researchers revealed that there were 2,783 males and 40 females in both prisons. The sample size consisted of 700 prison inmates. The proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted for this study. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was titled "Implementation of Basic LiteracyProgrammesScale" (IBLPS). The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by administering 40 copies of the instrument to prison inmates in Nigerian Prisons Amawbia in Anambra State which is not part of the study. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.77. Arithmetic mean was used to analyze data related to the research question while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of prison inmates on the implementation of basicliteracy programme in the custodies in Imo State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the inmates on their perceptionson the implementation of basic literacy programme in the custodies in Imo State

S/N	Items on basic literacy	X	SD	Remarks
1.	I like to learn reading skills	3.39	0.73	Agree
2.	I like to learn writing skills	3.70	0.60	Agree
3.	We are helped to learn skills in reading	3.42	0.77	Agree
4.	We are helped to learn skills in writing	3.47	0.82	Agree
5.	We are helped to learn skills in computation	3.53	0.73	Agree
6.	The skills which I acquired in numeracy will help me to learn how to compute figures accurately	3.31	0.68	Agree
7.	The skills I acquired in reading and writing are encouragement for me to continue learning, on release	3.23	0.87	Agree
8.	The skills I acquired in reading and writing will help me adjust in the society on release	2.79	1.15	Agree
9.	The facilitators on basic literacy are well trained	3.23	0.91	Agree

10.	We are helped to learn basic literacy skill	3.60	0.59	Agree
	Grand mean	**3.37**		**Agree**

Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that all the items as shown in the Table 1 were implemented under the platform of the basic literacy programme. The grand mean is above the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that from the impression and thoughts of the inmates, basic literacy programme is implemented in the custodies in Imo State. Similarly, the Standard Deviation (SD) scores ranging from 0.59 – 1.15 means that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female prison inmates on their perceptions on the implementation of basic literacy programmes in the custodies in Imo State.

Table 2: t-test Summary of Significant Difference between the mean ratings of male and female prison inmates on their Perceptions on the Implementation of Basic Literacy Programme

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	p-value	Alpha level	Remark
Male	652	32.64	3.41	676	0.06	0.05	Not significant
Female	26	33.12	3.99				

Table 2 shows the significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female prison inmates on their perceptions on the implementation of basic literacy programme in the custodies in Imo State. The result shows a p-value of 0.06 with 676 degree of freedom and α -value of 0.05. Since the p-value of 0.06 is greater than the α-value of 0.05 *(0.06 > 0.05)*, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female prison inmates on their perceptions on the implementation of basic literacy programme in the custodies in Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

The result from the analysis of the research question revealed that prison inmates perceived that basic literacy programme was implemented in

custodies in Imo State. This implies that the conduct of the basic literacy programme was satisfying to them. This finding agreed with the finding of Tennibiaje (2013), which revealed that literacy level among prison inmates in the prisons studied was high. This implies that prison inmates were equipped with learning, reading and computation skills. However, the finding of this study opposed the finding of Oroleye (2018), which observed that there was no existence of formal education in prisons. Although the present study revealed effective implementation of basic literacy in custodies in Imo State, efforts should be made by NPS to make basic literacy education functional; ie, linking it to acquisition of life skills. In addition, further efforts should be made towards improving the general environment and facilities for learning in the custodies because the illiteracy rate of 37.8% in Nigeria (Nigeria Literacy Rate, 2021) is not encouraging. Illiteracy is known to be the bane of socio-cultural, political and economic progress in any country around the globe. Literacy among all groups particularly among the vulnerable and the marginalized should be promoted for effectiveness and fairness in Nigeria.

The finding of the study is encouraging because it suggests a sense of satisfaction, confidence and hope for better life in the inmates. It implies that after discharge from the custody, the inmates can use their acquired literacy skills to live rewarding lives, by so doing, they become relevant to the society and rate of recidivism reduced to minimal

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The NPS should foster and promote basic literacy education because it serves as the foundation on which all other forms of education rest. The NPS should integrate guidance and counselling programme, andconscientizationprogrammes which will encourage their participation and involvement in decisions affecting their lives into literacy programmes and by so doing restoring their dignity of life in and out of the custody for better adjustment in the society. They should make the learning environment more learner friendly and comfortable for the learners and give them sense of belonging and dignity for a better life when discharged.

2. The government at all levels should scale up basic literacy campaigns in all States in Nigeria. NPS should recruit qualified adult educators who will facilitate on sustainable basis, the learning of the prison inmates both in contents, methods and approach.
3. The NPS should integrate functional skills to the basic literacy offered to the inmates so that they can be self-employed and self-reliant instead of being dependentafter discharge from the custody.

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