

ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE REFORMATION, REINTEGRATION AND REHABILITATION OF RECIDIVISTS IN NIGERIA CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OYO STATE

BY

Fehintola Victor Ayodeji: Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; E-mail: fehintolavictor9@gmail.com

**Fehintola Florence Mojirade: Peace Welfare Centre, Oyo State;
E-mail: florencemojirade@gmail.com**

Okpako Ochuko Ernest: Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; E-mail: ernest.kelvin26@gmail.com

Adeleke Ifedayo David: Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; E-mail: ifedayo.david@yahoo.com

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Sylvester Ehimare Umanhonlen: Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; E-mail: umasylvester@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the role of social support in the reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of recidivist in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design of the ex-post-facto type. Three hundred and sixteen (316) recidivists participated in the study. Four standardized instruments were used. Three research questions were raised and answered at 0.05 level of significance. The result indicated a significant relationship between social support and reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo State. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that reformation of recidivists will be enhanced if prisoners are given the necessary social support by the government, family and the general public.

Keywords: Social Support, Reformation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration

Introduction

There is a growing concern among the Nigerian public that the correctional service is fast losing its value due to the fact that it has failed to reform criminals (Adelola, 1994). Prison overcrowding, crime rate increase, juvenile delinquency, increase in recidivists due to lack of support on the part of the family and friends of prisoners including neglect of prison system and prisoners by the government is a problem that has contributed to return of ex-offenders back to prisons in Nigeria. The rate at which criminal activities take place in the Nigeria society is enormous. Most criminals that went to the prison as a result of minor offences came back more notorious. This is as a result of improper rehabilitation and reformation during and after incarceration. According to the CIA World Fact book (2009), in 1984, 32% of prisoners admitted in the Nigerian prisons were convicted, whereas the rest were on remand or awaiting trial. Among those convicted, about three-fourths served terms of less than two years, while 59 percent were first-time offenders and 41% percent were recidivists. Adelola (1994) further describes the status

quo as a lack of support needed from the government, non-governmental organization and the community in general to make possible proper rehabilitation and reformation are not forthcoming.

The correctional system and the society have failed in their responsibilities in rehabilitating, reforming and reintegrating ex-offenders. Prisoners have not received the support needed from the government in terms of provision of facilities for proper training and establishment. Prisoners after serving their jail terms are left to go back to the street without support. It is important to also note that there is no follow up after jail term to see how ex-convicts are doing. The same thing is also applicable to the general public and the family of ex-convicts. Lack of support from these people during and after jail term forced some of these ex-convicts to go back to their previous group which led them to their previous criminal acts. Some see them as a waste of to the society and do not wish to associate or relate with them. Some even as a result of been an ex-convict find it difficult to get employment. All these experiences of neglect and non-acceptance from the public force ex-convicts to go back to the group that will accept them which led them back to the prison wall.

Misty and Ali (2010), explained that the stigma attached to incarceration can often create barriers to resources and that inmates need post-incarceration services to prevent them from reoffending. These resources include, but are not limited to, regular and stable employment, education and training, treatment, and family related services. Post-incarceration services are important because without them former inmates may find themselves in secondary labour markets trying to earn livable wages to support themselves and their families. Searching for job may be very difficult for ex-offenders, most especially in a privately-owned establishment because of the problem of stigmatization. Spohn, Piper, Martin and Frenzel (2001), suggested that recidivism rates decreased when criminal offenders were offered education and rehabilitation opportunities while incarcerated or under direct supervision of the court. One may therefore argue that, recidivism rates also decreased when gainful employment was available during post-incarceration. Experience in Nigeria shows that, neglect from the government have negative impacts on the rehabilitation and reformation of prisoners as they are short of tutors and training equipment's during jail term. For instance, life in Nigeria prisons is so regimented to the extent that it appears that the primary purpose is punitive. A prisoner is more often than not mentally, physically, as well as psychologically brutalized, looking worse than he was before incarceration (Chiemeka, 2002).

According to Awake (2001), most inmate started with petty crime, and then moved up to property crime and finally graduate to serious offences. Under this condition, prisons can be best described as trade schools for criminal. Chiemeka (2002) has also put it succinctly that the current state of affairs of prisons can only take criminals off the street for a while. They do little, if anything, to deter crime in the long term thereby makes recidivism the order of the day. Recidivism is a common phenomenon in Nigeria today. Most of the census results in developing countries, such as Nigeria and especially in Akwa Ibom State, have shown high rate of inmate releases and recidivism (Hellen, 2009). She added that, this has constituted an impediment to social and economic development of the country. It is a known fact that every citizen of Nigeria has responsibilities, one of which is paying taxes. To say that those incarcerated are not living up to

this responsibility is rather stating the obvious. It is for this reason that measures should be taken to curb the problem of recidivism if not stopped.

Hellen (2009) further explained, according to studies, that recidivists are found in males more than the females. She stated that, the relationship between increased risk level and increased recidivism is consistent, without exception for the entire offender groups examined -adults, youth offenders, males, females, mentally disordered and non-disordered, violent and non-violent. She added further that, in 2008, available figures of prison inmates' population in Akwa Ibom State prisons formations were 1,096 most of which are recidivists. Some of the ex-convicts are naturally lazy. do not want to work hard to earn good living and thus relapse into crime irrespective of whatever vocational training acquired while in the prison. In concluding her statement, Hellen postulated that, apart from laziness on the part of the ex-convicts, number of factors contributes to recidivism in our society. They include family and societal attitude towards ex-prisoners by not accepted (loss of Social Support).

Other factors, according to her, that brew recidivism include, inconsistency of approach among programme staff, lack of programme continuity in the transition from confinement to after care; lack of long-term support systems, insufficient funds from government for proper rehabilitation and reintegration, the existence of a previous criminal record and high number of previous contacts with co-crime collaborators, drug addiction, lack of proper family foundation, home training, and homes. Penal custody is the primary sanction against people who have breached the criminal code, and serves the purposes of deterring offenders and others from committing the same crime, increasing offenders that come from the communities. Eventually, most of them will return to live within the community after discharge. It is therefore essential that they are not caught in a vicious circle of reoffending. Correctional systems, social support, etc. are expected to make those who pass through prisons become better persons when they leave than when they enter so as not to pose a threat to society.

However, very little attention has been paid on how the system of government, family support, friends' support and other external factors has affected positively or negatively the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of prisoners in Nigeria. The system of government and activities of the non-governmental organizations, regarding giving necessary support for effective rehabilitation is not encouraging; there is lack of support in term of social interaction, financial assistance, moral etc., from the family and friends of ex-convicts, stigmatization and inability to secure assistance for employment and establishment have contributed immensely to the current increase in recidivism in our society. Therefore, the objective of the current investigation hypothesized whether social support play a role in the reintegration, reformation and rehabilitation of recidivist prisoners.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the role played by social support in the reintegration, reformation and rehabilitation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo.

Specifically, the study will:

1. Examine the relationship between social support and reintegration of recidivists in the Nigeria

- correctional service, Oyo.
2. Ascertain the relationship between social support and reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo.
 3. Determine the relationship between social support and rehabilitation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo.

Research Question

1. What is the relationship between social support and reintegration of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo?
2. What is the relationship between social support and reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo?
3. What is the relationship between social support and rehabilitation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo?

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design of correlation type. The design was used because the researcher did not manipulate any variables of interest that occurred prior to the beginning of the study. The sample for the study consist of 316 recidivists incarcerated in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo state. The study adopted a purposive sampling procedure.

Social Support: Social support was measured using a scale developed by Zimet and Dahlem (1988). The scale had 10 items tapping into questions based on how the recidivists get support socially. Some of the examples of items in the scale include: *There is a special person who is around when I am in need, my family tries to help me and I can count on my friends when things go wrong. Etc.* The reliability of the scale was ascertained through a pilot study before used on the main participants and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained.

Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation was measured using a scale developed by Hendrick (2009). The scale had 10 items measuring rehabilitation. The participants responded to a 4-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability of the scale was ascertained through a pilot study before used on the main participants and a reliability coefficient of 0.92 was obtained.

Reintegration: Reintegration was also measured using an adapted scale from Malot and Fromader (2007). The scale had 10 items tapping into questions measuring reintegration. The participants responded to a 4-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree with high scores indicating a positive or favorable overall integration. The reliability of the scale was ascertained through a pilot study before used on the main participants and a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained.

Reformation: Reformation was measured using a scale developed by Hendrick (2009). The scale had 10 items tapping into questions measuring reformation. The participants responded to a 4-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability of the scale was ascertained through a pilot study before used on the main participants and a reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained.

Data was collected on the assistance of the assistant controller of prisons in charge social welfare unit and two psychologists attached to the prison. Consent was obtained from the recidivists. Questionnaires were administered after consent was obtained. The questionnaire took

approximately 20 minutes to complete and was given by the researchers. The study made use of Pearson product Moment Correlation statistical analysis as statistical tool.

Results

Hypothesis One

There will be no significant relationship between social support and reformation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Moment Correlations Showing Relationship between social support and reformation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	P	Remark
Social support	23.31	5.60				
Reformation	23.78	4.95	316	.302**	<0.05	Sig

From the Table 1, result revealed that social support had a significant relationship with reformation at ($r= 0.302$; $p<.05$). However, the result presented a positive relationship between the variables. That is, an increase in social support of recidivist will subsequently decrease the level of reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria prison. This hypothesis is therefore rejected and the alternative is upheld.

Hypothesis Two

There will be no significant relationships between social support and rehabilitation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Moment Correlations Showing Relationship between social support and rehabilitation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	P	Remark
Social support	23.31	5.60				
Rehabilitation	26.30	7.48	316	.406	>0.05	NS

From the Table 2, result revealed that social support had no significant relationship with rehabilitation at ($r= -0.406$; $p>.05$). However, the result implied that an increase in social support will not lead to decrease in the level of rehabilitation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service. This hypothesis is therefore accepted and the alternative is rejected.

Hypothesis Three

There will be no significant relationships between social support and reintegration of recidivists in Oyo correctional service. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Moment Correlations Showing Relationship between social support and reintegration of recidivists in Oyo correctional service

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r	P	Remark
Social support	23.31	5.60				
Reintegration	26.91	6.44	316	.098	>0.05	NS

From the Table 3, result revealed that social support had no significant relationship with rehabilitation at ($r = -0.098$; $p > 0.05$). However, the result implied that an increase in social support will not lead to decrease in the level of reintegration of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service. This hypothesis is therefore accepted and the alternative is rejected.

Discussion

Hypothesis one which stated that there will be no significant relationships between social support and reformation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results revealed an increase in social support of recidivist will subsequently decrease the level of reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria prison. This result corroborates the findings of Bayse, Allgood, and Van Wyk (1991) and Uggen (2000) that inmates who received education that helped mend and maintain their family relationships were less likely to re-offend and that employment may be a turning point for criminal offenders respectively.

Hypothesis two which stated that there will be no significant relationships between social support and rehabilitation of recidivists in Oyo correctional service was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results revealed an increase in social support will not lead to decrease in the level of rehabilitation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service. This results however negates the findings of Saylor and Smith (1992) that lack of training and experience appeared to be the primary barriers to job entry. This result also negates the findings of Samson (2004) that inmates who worked and supported while in prison as part of a work release program had a much better chance of getting employed after release.

Hypothesis three which stated that there will be no significant relationships between social support and reintegration of recidivists in Oyo correctional service was tested using Pearson Product moment correlations and the results revealed an increase in social support will not lead to decrease in the level of reintegration of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service. This results however negates the findings of Joseph and Allison (2009) that housing stability and social support has a positive effect of reintegration of prisoners but the findings however was supported by Holzer (2000) that conviction status did not affect employment status that employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby concluded that there is a significant relationship between social support and the reformation of recidivists in the Nigeria correctional service, Oyo

State. This therefore means that reformation of recidivists will be enhanced if prisoners are given the necessary social support by the government, family and the general public.

Recommendations

This research recommends:

1. The need for transitional inmate programs that can be implemented to reduce recidivism rates. First, the government should ensure that prison services are adequately funded and this will translate into adequate improvement on the existing rehabilitative and other facilities in the prison.
2. Prisoners should be given the opportunity to develop themselves through education and government should help in this area as this study has shown that most of the inmates who had senior secondary certificate and below constituted more than 80% of the study.
3. There is also need for parents to pay more attention on their male child and be interested in the group they move with as the male gender constituted 89% of the prisoners used in the study.

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