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The Impact of Prison Reforms on the Welfare of the Inmates: A Case Study of Afokang Prison, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract - The living conditions in Nigeria's prisons are very terrible and incapable of guaranteeing expected reformation of inmates. The reason being that there is general paucity in infrastructures, policies, workshops and corrupt disposed system. Given this background the main thrust of this study was to examine the impact of prison reforms on the welfare of the inmates. To achieve the purpose of this study two research questions were raised, which preceded the hypotheses. The design was empirical inquiry (expost facto). The population of the study consisted of all staff and inmates in the study area. A simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of two hundred. Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient served as the statistical instrument. The result of the analysis shows that: poor remuneration and absence of reformatory facilities militate against reforms workability. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made which include amongst others, the need for a body established by law and charged with the responsibility of visiting prisons with a view to identifying and proffering solutions to the immediate problems of the system, and inmates should be realistically introduced to useful trade that are geared toward occupational reality of the world outside prison.

Keywords : inmate, prison, reform awaiting trial, warder.

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite Nigeria's progress on democratic, economic and political reforms, Nigeria's prisons are yet to make appreciable impact on the welfare of the inmates. A recurring debate within contemporary academic circles, criminologists, social workers and prison experts, is to ensure an appropriate template for proper prison administration that will reflect its objectives. Even though crime and other vices need to be deterred, it should be to the extent that its application is reasonable to the inmates during and after imprisonment; it is therefore needful to be logical and rational in punishing. This position is further stressed by Baccaria (1764) that crime that produced pleasure must be counteracted by pain such as imprisonment but reasonably.

Nigeria prisons are "living hell" twenty to thirty inmates arrive at the prison every day, thus over-

crowding the reformatory structure which do not even exist in the true sense often times tripling the original carrying capacity (Ikoyi Prison in Lagos State, capacity 800) but now in excess of 1,200. This scene is reflected in all prisons structures in the country (The Nation, 2010). There are shortage of bed spaces only half of the inmates sleep on bed. Disease is widespread cells are unclean and offer little ventilation resulting in unhealthy and dangerous sanitary condition (Yelodu, 1991). Prison and detention conditions remain harsh and life threatening. Prison inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise irregularly and many inmates provide their own food. Only those with money or whose relatives brought food regularly had sufficient food. Petty corruption among prisons officials makes it difficult for money provided for food to reach the prisoners and poor inmates often relied on "hand-out" from others to survive. Those unwholesome treatment have contributed to the death in detention of numerous prisoners, (Annual Prison Report, 1984).

The report by Human Right Practice Commission for prisoner's dignity 1999, estimated that at least one inmate dies per day in the Kiri-Kiri prison in Lagos alone. Dead inmates are promptly buried in graves on the compound usually without their families being notified. It is sad that claims like these are not investigated and the system is allowed to rot, leaving prison as charade of government propaganda.

There is more to imprisonment than opening and closing of prison gates. Modern penal management techniques emphasized reform of the inmates or the convicts. The current attitude in penal circles is to see improvement from the perspective of reform and rehabilitation rather than from the perspective of punishment. It is assumed that those who have committed crimes need help, and should be assisted to lead a good life. This view is predicated upon the understanding that those who have fallen foul of the collective norms and laws of the society expressed in criminal laws should be reformed; that is why the term correction is applied to reflect this thinking, argues (Ostreicher, 2003).

The question is how can inmates be reformed or corrected in Nigerian prisons with such systemic decay? Of the 227 prisons in the country, four out of five

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were built before 1950. The infrastructure is old and decrepit, lack of decent meal, medicines and denial of contact with families and friends which are reportedly damaging to the physical and mental well-being of inmates. Building in use as workshops are inadequate, and some prisons non-existent. Educational and vocational training programmes don't exist, even when they exist, they lack necessary materials and limited to "handful" of inmates. To that extent any singing and praying that keeps the inmates engaged. Even going to church and mosque is restricted inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise only irregularly. This accounts for why most inmates released go back to commit crimes. This explains why there is high rate of recidivism because they were not properly reformed or rehabilitated. (Salaudeen, 2004).

Incontrovertibly the administration of inmates in the Nigeria prisons is very out dated. For example, each day, prison directors register inmate name on a blackboard positioned near the prison gate and report to the zonal office which in turn, report to the headquarters in Abuja more worrisome nothing is done as regards their accommodations and reformatory and rehabilitative imperatives shockingly. Successive governments in Nigeria have made recommendations and suggestions to better the operation of prisons, but little or nothing has been done in terms of implementation (Ayuk, 2003).

Recently, the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave its committee on interior a two week deadline to submit a report on a bill seeking to improve the appalling condition of the nation's prisons titled: A bill for an Act to repeal the Prison Act. This bill seeks to provide a legal framework for the comprehensive reform of the Nigerian prison system. Regrettably, this and similar efforts in the past so far, have been inconclusive. For instance, Obasanjo's government set up a National Working Group on Prison Reform and congestion to audit the state of the nation's prisons and make recommendations to the government. Successive Attorneys – General in the country have equally made recommendations to the government on prison reform following the extensive audit of the nation's prisons in 2005 - former Attorney General and Minister of Justice Bayo Ojo and the Federal Ministry of Justice recommended to the then Federal Executive Council to declare the issue of awaiting trial inmates (ATI) a matter of urgent national importance. Till date, nothing fruitful has resulted from the reform initiative (Nation, 2010).

It should be noted however, that security of lives and properties still remains the utmost concern of every government and since crime is functional – people must consciously or unconsciously "slapped" the law. The issue is, are there structures equipped enough to guarantee reformation of these defaulters? Would these offenders changed to be better citizens or more

"hardened" upon release? These issues raised pose serious challenge to our prison and criminal justice system. To guarantee or for prison reforms to be effective, the three instrumentalities of the criminal justice system (Police, Court and Prison) must be responsive.

II. THE PROBLEM

The unsavory nature of Nigeria's prisons leaves one in doubt, with too many questions and fewer answers; being that majority of persons become hardened and daring than when they never went behind bars and commit more heinous crimes. Officers and men of Nigeria prisons epitomize corruption and no will to discharge their duties and responsibilities – certainly not satisfied with their conditions of service.

Interestingly, prison still remains indispensable in correcting, reforming and rehabilitating "perceived convicts" in Nigeria. It is worrisome that recommendations and suggestions made to government for prison reforms are yet to be implemented. This study therefore, is an attempt to address this question: why can't Nigeria prisons reform an inmate to the extent that his or her welfare is appreciable?

III. HYPOTHESES

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the availability of reformatory facilities and inmates skill acquisition to lead a life devoid of criminality.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between death of inmates and inadequate medical facilities and overcrowding.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will be of immense benefit to prison administrators and bodies like non-governmental organizations (NGO's), Amnesty International, Human Rights Activists etc. Specifically it will help the government of Nigeria to plan, given that, the problems faced by inmates are exposed to that extent prison administrators will find better ways of reformatory process to avoid recidivism.

V. A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFOKANG PRISON (CALABAR – NIGERIA)

The Calabar camp was established in 1890 for the purpose of harbouring some inmates. The prison is headquarter in the city of Calabar, the capital of Cross River State – Nigeria. It is situated in the suburbs of in the city near the mangrove swamp annexing the Calabar – river.

The Calabar prison camp now known as Calabar prison has changed its status to a "convict prison" without adequate structural modification put in place for the ever increasing number of inmates. For example the original carrying capacity was one hundred

(100) inmates but it has a surplus of five hundred (500) inmates.

The prison has a kitchen and administrative block aside from the cell block. A dilapidated and unequipped clinic within the prison environment. The workshop is in applauding state and nothing to show in respect to training and equipping inmates to be self-sustaining on discharged.

The Calabar Prison banja a formal organization observes all forms of bureaucracy as espouse by Max Webber which includes; hierarchy of authority, division of work based on functional specialization, clear statement of right and duties of personnel, promotion and selection based on technical competence. Rules and procedures in were still adhere to as concern the day to day running of the prisons. The officer in charge of the prison is the Deputy Controller of the prison whose function amongst others is oversee the administration of the prison and delegate duties to his subordinates. He reports to the controller in – charge of Cross River State Command.

VI. THE NEED FOR PRISON REFORMS

According to Wikipedia online encyclopedia (2005), prison reforms are attempts to improve the overall conditions of prisons machines and it is aimed at a more effective penal system typically from one model to another essentially; to improve positively the operations of the prison. The 1990 Nigerian prison reform trust report sees prison reforms as doing honourably what ought to be done according to dignity to human existence.

Hobbes (1651) asserts that; “it is the nature of punishment to have for an end the disposition of men to obey the law, for the punishment fore known if not great enough to deter men from the action – is an investment to it; because when compared to the benefit of their injustice with the harm of their punishment if not reformed, by nature they choose that which appeareth best for themselves”.

The purpose of reforms is to train through appropriate conditions convicted prisoner to be better citizens on discharge. Reformation of prisons and prisoners in Nigeria still conjures punishment (Kalu, 2002). The Annual Prison Report 2004 construe reformation for prisoners as treatment and training of convict within the purview of:

- a) provision of work for the prisoner after discharge;
- b) special attention to education;
- c) the experiences of personal influence on the individual by members of the prison staff and
- d) the provision of all possible opportunities for the development of a series of personal responsibility.

The implication is that those who commit crimes do not have jobs and need to be exposed to education both for skills development and the training of the mind

for self development. Armed with these objectives, the prison is expected to “beef – up” its workshops for skills acquisition in such trade as carpentry, shoe making, tailoring, draughtmanship, joinery, printing, electrical and metal work etc. If acquired by the inmates, would assist them to earn a living on discharge without relapsing into crime (Ayuk, 2003).

Beside, skills acquisition programmes were expected to be contemplated by consistent psycho-remedial sessions which would help the inmate a great deal in understanding the reality and making sense out of it. This new orientation in the penal practice is believed to be informed by the fact that, improvement and the subsequent loss of freedom was punishment enough; and that while not trying to make life easier for prisoners in Nigeria, it was acknowledged that punitive improvement had deformative effects on the minds and out look of those subjected to it.

Prison service of Nigeria derives its power from Cap. 366 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, (1990) to perform the following functions amongst which include; take into custody all those legally intended and set in motion mechanisms for their training and reformation; preparatory to returning them back to the society as normal and law abiding citizens. The implication therefore is that, reformed prisoners do no longer be a security threat to national peace which is so vital for socio-economic and political development.

VII. METHODOLOGY

a) *Research Design*

It is empirical inquiry (expost facto). Reason being that the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manifestation have already occurred.

b) *Population of the Study*

The target population was all the prison staff and inmates of Afokang – Prison Calabar, Cross River State – Nigeria.

c) *Sample Population*

A total of 200 persons were used (160 are the inmates while 40 represented the prison officials). This number (200) was regarded as large enough to enable the research make generalization on the impact of prison reforms on the welfare of the inmates in Nigeria prisons. The supposition is that, the respondents are quite knowledgeable about their conditions as staff and as inmates.

d) *Instrumentation*

Two instruments used were primary source (questionnaire constructed by the researcher and use of oral interview). The secondary sources (information obtained from textbooks, magazines, journals and newspapers). The questionnaire method for data collection was preferred because it was found to be

more efficient – it allowed for collection of data within the time frame and financial resource available to the investigator.

The nature of each question was determined in relation to the purpose and significance of the investigation. The questionnaire were structured questions of the six (6) points likert scale and the items were set to reflect the impact of prison reforms on the welfare of the inmates.

e) Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using the pearson product moment correlation statistics.

VIII. RESULT

The results of data analyses is presented below.

a) Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between the availability of reformatory facilities and inmate skills acquisition to lead a life devoid of criminality.

Table 1 : Pearson moment correlation co-efficient on availability of reformatory facilities and inmates skills acquisition to lead a life devoid of criminality

Variable	Σx	Σx^2	Calculated 'r' value	Critical 'r' value	Decision
Reformatory facilities	275 0	5028	.198	0.113	Rejected
Skills acquisition	203 1	2715 0			

P < 0.05

Table 1 shows that the calculated 'r' value, which is 0.191 is higher than the critical 'r' value which is 0.11. The null hypothesis is rejected which states that, there is no significant relationship between availability of reformatory facilities and inmates skills acquisition to lead a life devoid of criminality. Hence there is a relationship between availability of reformatory facilities and inmates skills acquisition.

b) Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between health of inmate and inadequate medical facilities and overcrowding.

Table 2 : Pearson moment correlation co-efficient between health of inmates and inadequate medical facilities and overcrowding

Variable	Σx	Σx^2	Calculated 'r'-value	Critical 'r'-value	Decision
Corrupt attitude of government /prison administrators	265 0	454 5	0.195	0.55	Rejected
Poor implementation of reforms	203 1	271 5			

P < 0.05

This table shows that, the calculated 'r' value, which is 0.195 is higher than the critical 'r' value which is 0.55. The null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between death of inmates and inadequate medical facilities and overcrowding is rejected. Therefore there is a connection between death of inmates and inadequate medical facilities.

IX. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The major task here was to establish how reforms can impact positively on the welfare of inmates. The findings, however, confirm what already have been said during casual interaction and debates. That Nigerian prison is a dungeon and represents inhumanity to man. The analysis of hypothesis one reveals that there is a strong relationship between availability of reformatory facilities and inmates skills acquisition to lead a dignified and respectable life. Furthermore, it revealed that recidivism amongst ex-convict is high; because inmates were not trained in any particular trade hence on discharge they become frustrated and despondent. This confirms Osefo (1990) assertion, that planned reforms in Nigeria prison was always unrealistic and that the suppose reformation/rehabilitation was nothing less than deformation and a charade.

Equally significant from the findings in Afokang-Calabar Prison Nigeria, is the sorry state of the carpentry workshop, while the mechanic workshop does not exist. The art and craft workshop existed but not constructive and productive enough to give it a pass mark. The hair dressing saloon had only four (4) driers and eight (8) sowing machines, which obviously cannot serve the rehabilitative needs of 450 inmates.

Equally substantiated in terms of findings was that, there exist a significant relationship between death of inmates and inadequate medical facilities and over crowding. The findings reveal that health situations in Nigerian prisons are saddening and precarious as the

existing “so-called” prison medical center are just– but– a “resemblance” of a patent medicine store. No drugs, few medical personnel to attend to growing and incessant sick prison population. Skin rashes, tuberculosis and kwashiorkor are most prevalent amongst inmates leading to death of prisoners. This confirms Salaudeen’s (2004) position, that those inmates who die are quickly buried without the authorities informing their relatives.

The findings also revealed that the population of the inmates have exceeded the original (300) carrying capacity, with excess of 250, totalling 550 which has resulted in unhealthy sanitary conditions, with disease pervasive in cramped and poorly ventilated facilities (Yekodu, 1991). More appalling from the findings was that, because of excess population most inmates have no bed and mattresses, they are forced to sleep on concrete floor often without blankets. These unwholesome treatment have contributed to the death in detention of numerous prisoners.

Finally, the findings reveals that government has not totally abandon the task of reforming and rehabilitating prisons and inmates. She has been planning and making funds available, though little to assuage the debilitating and unsavouring state of the prisons, but these funds are either misappropriated or swindled out-rightly by court official for purposes other than the original intensions.

X. CONCLUSION

The prison is a component of the criminal justice system like every other place in the world charged institutionally for/to, confine, reform, rehabilitate offenders and ensure that on discharge they abide by the dominant values of the polity. In here, convicts are expected to be trained, counsel, resocialised, re-scienticed etc to lead as better citizens. Unfortunately in Nigeria prison, inmates become more hardened and not reformed and rehabilitated afterall. This account for high rate of recidivism in Nigeria. This is because reforms endeavours in Nigeria are mere travesty and charade of government until reforms are disposed wholistically (presence of carpentary workshops, provision for schooling, train personnels, office accommodation, better wages and general working conditions) prisons objectives and goals will remain illusive.

Prison reforms as it were have been and still remain an important part of the Nigeria prison setting vis-à-vis social order. Because these reforms are action statement of governing pertaining to issues in the system describing the intended objectives of rehabilitating the inmates and the general working conditions of personnels.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and analysis there of, the following recommendations are made:

- a) Inmates should be realistically introduced to useful trades that are geared toward occupational reality of the world outside prison, so that they could better their lives on discharge from prison.
- b) The federal government should take concrete steps to rehabilitate the cells, barracks and offices occupied by the prison staff and inmates.
- c) Adequate and functional medical facilities should be provided to arrest the high rate of diseases and death incidence among the inmates.
- d) There should be a body established by law and charged with visiting prisons with a view to identifying and proffering solutions to the immediate problems of the Nigerian prison system.
- e) There should be law requiring the controller of prisons in various states to compile the names of convicted prisoners who have been of good behaviour within a specific period for the purpose of granting them amnesty, so that congestion problem can be eased.
- f) The government and related agencies should make sure that only persons who have been convicted for criminal offences by a competent court of law shall serve as their abode for the period.
- g) Officers and men of Nigeria prison should be properly trained – to best handle the nifty gritty of prison issues.
- h) Corrupt officials should be severely dealt with and probably dismissed if found wanting.
- i) The court and the judges should also be serious and attend to cases with dispatch to avoid congestion and death.
- j) Reforms should be backed with the needed political will to be implemented, because makings without implementation is a good as not making the reforms.

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