

Inmate Rehabilitation Idea and the Challenges of Policy Implementation in the Nigerian Correctional Centres

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Abstract

The paper examined the challenges of policy implementation in Nigeria with a focus on inmate rehabilitation ideas in Nigerian correctional centres. Attempts to make prisons in Nigeria treatment or rehabilitation centres is not a recent phenomenon but the passage of the Nigerian Correctional Service Bill into law in 2019 was a watershed in the history of correctional rehabilitation in the country. In addition to the change of name to reflect rehabilitation as the goal of incarceration, Section 14 (1&2) of the 2019 Correctional Service Act provides for the rehabilitation of inmates as a core responsibility of the service. Using a desk research approach, the paper explored available information to examine the progress of inmate rehabilitation idea in Nigeria. However, challenges to effective policy implementation have negatively impacted the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in the country. Implementing effective inmate rehabilitation policies in Nigeria requires a holistic and sustained effort involving various stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organisations and the community, staff training, assessment and classification of inmates, removal of legal and social barriers, improved funding, and improved collaboration with the non-governmental organisations.

Key Words: Rehabilitation, inmate rehabilitation, public policy, policy implementation, Nigerian correctional service.

Introduction

The inevitability of crime in human societies (Canter & Youngs, 2016) and the centrality of effective security to the development and survival of every state (Yagboyaju, 2016; Pogason, 2013; Nwolise 2009, Jega, 2002; Zabadi, 2001) have remained the major justifications for the eternal struggle to fight or control crimes in every society. The rise of modern nation-states, especially after the Treaty of Westphalia (1864), which gave impetus to the states as the centre of interpersonal, group, and societal relations has given rise to the role of the state in human societies, especially in the area of peace and security (Ghani et al.).

Inmate rehabilitation policy represents not only one of the instruments employed by governments around the world toward addressing security concerns but also, a major crime control policy. Nigeria's crime control policy, during the colonial administration and under various military regimes entailed multiple layers of draconian arrangements. For example, Decree No. 47 of 1970 prescribed the death penalty for anyone found guilty of armed robbery offences. It also empowered state governments across the country to set up Armed Robbery and Firearms tribunals to try armed robbery cases. The tribunals had powers to punish through death sentence and there was no provision for appeal to the superior courts.

Furthermore, correctional (prison) service in Nigeria was originally conceived as an instrument of punishment, particularly in terms of physical architecture and general conditions.

According to the United Nations Country Report (2015), life in Nigerian correctional centres has the trademark of being harsh and life-threatening. The report further added that convicted inmates and other detainees, the majority of whom had not been tried, were reportedly subjected to extra-judicial execution, torture, gross overcrowding, food and water shortages, inadequate medical treatment, deliberate and incidental exposure to heat and sun, and infrastructure deficiencies that led to wholly inadequate sanitary conditions that could result in death. Consequently, rather than complementing the effort to further secure the country, correctional centres have become incubators for criminal activities over the years (Oyewo, 2021). Meanwhile, Nigeria's successful return to civil rule in 1999 was ushered in to improve welfare and institutional capacity, especially in the area of maintenance of law and order, on the strength of the linkage between social justice, rule of law, and development. The Obasanjo civilian administration (1999-2007), among other activities, de-congested the prisons increased inmates' feeding allowance, increased the national minimum wage and established the national poverty eradication programme (The Reformer 2006). The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) were also established between the year 2000 and 2004 to further strengthen policies to encourage transparency, accountability and well-being of the citizens and other categories of residents.

At the sub-national level, state governments also made efforts to boost the capacity for law maintenance, security and safety. This came by way of the establishment and continuous funding of special security outfits (Joint Task Force) such as Operation MESA, Operation Sweep, Operation *Gbale*, and Operation Burst in Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo States, among others (Oyewo, 2021). Also, each of the 774 local government authorities in Nigeria reportedly purchased a *Prado* Patrol vehicle to enhance the patrol capacity of the Nigerian Police Force (The Guardian, 2000). The court system in Nigeria enjoys the rare privilege of being the only leg of the criminal justice system in the country whose responsibilities are not only substantially but constitutionally shared among the three tiers of government and therefore enjoys investment and attention from multiple tiers of government.

A major step toward strengthening Nigeria's internal security through the prison system in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is the embracement of the inmate rehabilitation idea in the prisons, which is the most subscribed form of punishment in the country (Bamgbose, 2010). Previously, the political justification and common sense purpose of penitentiaries was mainly to keep people safe from those among the general population who have proven their dangerousness or who have transgressed property laws that have been deemed important for maintaining social order, safety and security (Drake, 2016).

However, despite the efforts to enthrone corrections in the Nigerian Prisons, particularly, through the passage of the Nigerian Correctional Service bill into law in 2019, the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in Nigeria remains a challenge as is the case with such other policies. Effective policy implementation remains a critical challenge militating against efforts to develop Nigeria and it is on this basis that the paper examines factors affecting the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in the Nigerian Correctional Service. In addition to the introductory text, the remainder of the paper is divided into a literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

Literature Review

Public Policy

Literature on the scope and challenges of public policy, particularly in developing countries is wide and diverse. According to Sambo (2007), public policy is the outcome of the political process of value allocation. This indicates that policies in the public sphere are governmental

concerns because they are formulated by what Easton (1965) called ‘authorities’ that is people who engage in the daily affairs of a political system. Therefore, a government policy is an authoritative plan of action for the promotion and allocation of selected values, which is deemed by a governmental authority to be in the common interest of the people.

Similarly, Meir & Bohte (2007) define public policy as a purposive course of action followed by actors or a set of actors, usually related to the government in a problem or matters of public concern. From the foregoing, public policies involve authoritative plans of action for the promotion and allocation of selected values, which are deemed by a governmental authority to be in the common interest of the people. In sum, public policy represents the umbrella term for every form of purposive relationship between a government and its environment across different sectors of a nation’s life.

Meanwhile, the scope of public policy in contemporary times has become wider for several factors such as technology, urbanisation, industrialisation, social organisation etc. According to Sapru (2006), public policies may deal with such substantive areas as defence, environmental protection, medical care, education, housing etc. Therefore, policies are grouped or categorised either based on their coverage, that is, the number of people affected by it and, the expected output (objectives). Lowi (cited in Sapru, 2006) categorised public policies into four: (i) Distributive Policy (ii) Redistributive Policy (iii) Regulatory Policy (iv) Constituent Policy. Other typologies of public policies as identified by Olaniyi (2003) include Prohibitive, Mandatory policies.

Inmate Rehabilitation Policy

Inmate rehabilitation policy refers to the strategic mobilisation of public resources for the treatment of offenders for the benefit of the offenders and society at large. According to Simon (2009), imprisonment is now being used in the process of solving social problems such as drug addiction, lack of job skills and education, as a means of crime control. The idea of rehabilitation in the correctional homes, in the words of Bentham (1843:226), is generally concerned with how to turn the correctional institutions into ‘a mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious’ so that re-entry of ex-convicts into the larger society becomes mutually beneficial to the society and themselves.

Similarly, the popular prison inmate rehabilitation idea is partly based on its potential to promote significant personal changes and strengthen public security (Lipsey & Cullen, 2007). The need to treat human beings with dignity and the hope of behavioural rebirth are also some of the driving forces behind inmate rehabilitation. According to Nwolise (2010), correctional homes point toward the establishment and management of penitentiaries, as a form of social clinic where psychologists, medical doctors, social workers, researchers, spiritual workers, and others operate hand in hand with the correctional personnel to achieve the best results of transforming the inmates away from being deviants to being disciplined, productive, useful and patriotic citizens after discharge. In the words of Dambazau (2007), inmate rehabilitation is a major system designed to mitigate or eliminate the accompanying effects of incarceration, especially those relating to their economic, psychological, social and political changes after discharge.

According to section 4 (1) of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (otherwise known as Mandela Rules, 2015), the major objectives of punishment by incarceration or related systems that impact human liberty and freedom are essential to guide the society against criminality and decrease the possibility of recidivism. These objectives are more probably realised if the duration of incarceration is employed to make sure, to a very large extent, the re-uniting of the accused back to the community after discharge to make it possible for him to leave within the ambit of the law and be socio-economically relevant. This approach to imprisonment is built on the concept of inmate

rehabilitation. Foucault, (1995) narrated the growth of the use of the penitentiaries in the eighteenth century and tagged it the period of 'The Great Confinement'. He disagrees with Durkheim's that penitentiaries are means of power relations in society. He maintained that the purpose of imprisonment in contemporary times is to ensure that the cause of anti-social behaviour is identified for corrective purposes with the ultimate goal of promoting obedience. The introduction of experts such as social workers, psychiatrists, and criminologists into the legal process according to Foucault (1995) represents the major significance of such involvement and proliferation of experts.

Meanwhile, scholarly attention on the rehabilitation of offenders has continued to produce diverse results. While several writers have voiced a dim hope of correctional activities in the prisons based on the growing number of re-offenders among other factors, arguments against rehabilitation and its programmes, for example, have suffered several attacks over the years. Martinson (1974), for instance, argues that imprisonment is purely a means of punishment and as such, incapable of rehabilitation of offenders. He identifies the lack of possibility on the part of the inmates to exercise freedom in the selection of the preferred rehabilitation programme and the incompatibility of the prison settings as a learning environment as the major bane of the possibility of functional rehabilitation. Similarly, Pursley (1997:76) also notes that "identifying antecedent behaviours is often misleading. For instance, the assurance that low standard of living and lack of formal training were the causes of criminal behaviours of an offender may be misleading".

Similarly, several researches have shown that prison treatment does not reduce former inmates' criminal activity (Drago et al., 2008). According to Freeman (2003), available data on recidivism in Nigeria is an indication that a good percentage of ex-offenders who are released by the Nigerian Correctional centres re-offend and get re-incarcerated. Similarly, Braithwaite (1989) maintains that reintegrating the offenders remains largely unsuccessful. More recently, Latessa et al. (2020) observed that rehabilitation programmes, especially those that focus on factors other non-criminogenic factors, such as creative abilities, physical conditioning and self-esteem do not reduce criminal behaviour. This reinforces the position of Hurd, a former British Home Secretary, who pointed out that "prison is an expensive way of making bad people worse" (The Economist, 2017). The scepticism that graces the rehabilitative notion or what Garland (2001) refers to as the decline of the rehabilitative ideal is justified when viewed from Nigeria's experience with its prison population.

Table 1.1: Inmate Population and Recidivism (2013-2015)

STATUS	2013		2014		2015 AS AT Q2	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
FIRST OFFENDER	105284	6203	91832	5466	31853	2009
CONVICTED ONCE	18000	1061	9145	430	6271	176
TOTAL	123284	7264	100977	5896	38124	2185
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
CONVICTED TWICE	11653	250	14510	551	2879	72
CONVICTED THRICE	7168	123	7907	209	1438	31
CONVICTED FOUR TIMES	4476	79	4476	92	527	9
CONVICTED FIVE TIMES	3011	52	2330	56	290	5
CONVICTED SIX TIMES OR MORE	825	24	1009	21	229	3
CONVICTED SEVEN TIMES OR MORE	635	27	799	9		
TOTAL	27768	555	31031	938	5363	120

Source: Nigerian Prison Service, 2016.

Therefore, rather than focusing on preparing inmates for life after imprisonment through rehabilitation programmes, ‘new punishment’ an idea characterised by deterrence and incapacitation developed into the objective of prison in political dialogue because of the lack of success of rehabilitation ideas. This change in the use of the prison system is also known as the new punishment or culture of control. Consequently, rather than functioning as an instrument of rehabilitation, the correctional system and the entire criminal justice system relapsed into a new era of ‘punitiveness’ (Garland 2001).

However, the rehabilitation idea has survived frequent attacks and it is now progressively guiding crime control policies and practices in many countries across the world (Cullen, 2013). There are several arguments both practical and theoretical, in support of the rehabilitation idea. For example, Cullen & Gendreau (2000) maintain that rehabilitation programmes are truly capable of reducing the level of re-offending and criminality in general and this has come to represent why the welfare of inmates and rehabilitation programmes become important in offender management. Therefore, in countries where inmate rehabilitation, rather than outright retribution is favoured, imprisonment policy revolves around inmate rehabilitation and some degree of compassionate treatment, particularly as spelt out by the UN Minimum Standards for the Treatment of Offenders and other relevant documents. The Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Finland and Denmark hold the ace in this direction. According to Ugelvic (2016), Nordic prisons are regarded as examples of humanity and decency in penal systems. The rehabilitation idea is also largely popular among countries following the concept of libertarianism and democratic ethos. The objectives of imprisonment in these countries have been shifted from outright punishment to deterrence, protection, and rehabilitation (Dambazau, 2012). A lot of success stories about inmate rehabilitation are been recorded. For example, the Netherlands from the early eighties has succeeded in reforming her inmates and criminality in general to the point that several prisons no longer have inmates.

Surplus prison cells in the Netherlands are currently used to accommodate inmates from nearby states or as detention centres for illegal immigration. In another dimension, a particular prison in the same country now serves as a hotel (Downes, 2007:94).

In a related development, Mohamed & Mohamed (2015) argue that skill acquisition programmes being an aspect of inmate rehabilitation give inmates a better chance to be useful to themselves and the larger community after incarceration. It also reduces the rate at which ex-inmates recidivate. It is perhaps, for this reason that Petersilia (2000), asserts that effective rehabilitation is a sure way to the security of both inmates and members of the larger community. In sum, the idea of rehabilitation, despite different arguments for and against it, has gained currency so much that, by the turn of the 19th century, it had been adopted as the official policy on the treatment of offenders in several countries (Cavadino et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Rehabilitation Theory of Punishment: The study adopted the Foucauldian version of the rehabilitation theory of punishment. The theory took its roots from the utilitarian theory as espoused by Bentham (1843). Rehabilitation theory is generally ‘consequentialist’ in nature and the Foucauldian version of the theory is premised on the belief that punishment by imprisonment should target the mind of the felon to correct the aberrant behaviour. Punishment by imprisonment according to Foucault should be corrective and inmates ought to be subjected to rehabilitation, rather than retribution. He went further to assert that the prison is supposed to be an instrument of social control and as such, the felon, rather than being cut off and stigmatised, must after correction, be accepted and re-integrated. Another major assumption of the theory, according to Foucault is that the penitentiaries and their organisational framework need to function as part of the modern political economy through learning and production. With this approach, the correctional institutions are not mainly meant to sequester crime through incarceration of the offenders but also empower them to be useful to society upon discharge.

Foucault (1995) explained that the development of rehabilitation as the major justification for imprisonment is premised on several factors including the changing nature of power relations between the government and citizens and human civilization and explains the essence of imprisonment as punishment contends that even if an offender has violated the laws of the society, he remains a human being and therefore, deserves to be treated based on humanistic principles. The theory sees punishment as a form of cure for crime. Therefore, the objective of punishment should be to reform the felon. Other advocates of Rehabilitation Theory such as Ewing (1980) contend that through a humanistic approach to offender management, a positive change may be brought about in the character of the felons. The theory further contends that severe punishment of inmates can simply humiliate criminals and harden them but certainly not reform them. According to Dambazau (2012), reformation is one of the most subscribed explanations for imprisonment in the 21st century. The theory is a variant of the utilitarian theory of punishment which is generally forward-looking and tends to view punishment as a way of advancing societal interest through reformation.

Methodology

The paper is essentially, an assessment of inmate rehabilitation ideas in the Nigerian correctional centres. Desk research method was employed to enhance the gathering of background information, and review and analyse existing data. The method, in particular, is valuable for the study because it helps the researcher to understand the current state of knowledge on the subject matter. To this effect, attempts were made to synthesize data from existing sources such as books, reports, official documents and media reports to constructively assess the rehabilitation policy in Nigeria. With the Rehabilitation Theory of Punishment as the framework, discussions on the major theme of the paper were equally carried out to analyse

how the challenges of policy implementation undermine the capacity of the Nigerian Correctional Service to function as a vehicle for effective inmate rehabilitation in Nigeria.

Discussions

Inmate Rehabilitation in the Nigerian Correctional Centres

The popularity of the correctional institution as a major tool for the enforcement of law and order, and an instrument of welfare/rehabilitation programmes has grown to be one of the major justifications for imprisonment in many countries across the world (Cavadino et al., 2013; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). The performance of prison systems is now being measured via their security and rehabilitation functions. Thus, even though the prison system started essentially as a punitive institution, the correctional objectives of the prisons have now gained ascendancy in offender management in many countries, especially those where Western democratic ethos such as libertarianism, and human rights issues are highly prized (King, 2001; Howell, 2008; Dambazau, 2012). The idea of rehabilitation in the correctional homes in the words of Bentham (1843:226) is generally concerned with how to turn the correctional institutions into 'a mill for grinding rogues, honest and idle men, industrious' so that re-entry of ex-convicts into the larger society becomes mutually beneficial to the society and themselves.

In Nigeria, inmate rehabilitation policy like others, represents an area of relationship between the government and its environment. Beyond the global and regional push, the entronement of correctional ideas in the country is equally an outcome of power and economic relations. For example, the entronement of democracy with its attendant features and the fact that economic offenders constitute over 70% of the country's prison population (Oyewo, 2021) are enough justifications for the entronement of inmate rehabilitation ideas in the country. Although rehabilitation idea in Nigerian prisons predates the country's independence and the 1968 unification of prison structure across the country, the official mandate of the country's prisons to properly function as both correctional and coercive institutions effectively began in 2019 when the Nigerian Correctional Service bill was passed into law (Nigerian Prison Service, 2015).

Despite the ascendancy of rehabilitation ideas in offender management around the world and the passage of the Nigerian Correctional Service bill into law in 2019, the Nigerian Correctional Service is yet to functionally transform into a correctional institution. Historically, the rate of re-offending in the Nigerian Correctional Service is high. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2016), of the 11,930 convicted inmates in Nigerian prisons in 2015, 6,447 representing (56.6%) were first-time convicts. 2,951 convicted inmates representing (24.7%) were second-time convicts and, 1,469 and 5,36 inmates representing (12.3%) and (4.5%) of the total convicted inmates were convicts for the third and fourth time respectively. This huge figure for recidivism indicates the failure of the Nigerian Correctional centres to achieve rehabilitation.

Therefore, the need for rehabilitation in Nigerian correctional centres cannot be over-emphasised. Correctional institutions are expected not only to keep felons for punitive and deterrence purposes but also to address the root causes of crime (Drake 2016). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2016, three types of offences: stealing, robbery and armed robbery constituted the reasons for incarcerating 65,153 inmates, representing 56.4% of 115,464 inmates across Nigerian correctional centres in 2016. This figure clearly shows that the majority of the inmates of the correctional centres are economic offenders. It is based on this that correctional institutions in Nigeria are currently striving to share the provision of social welfare services, especially those concerned with skill acquisition programmes with agencies such as the National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), National Directorate of Empowerment (NDE), and Small and Medium Scale Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN).

Despite the clear provision of section 14 of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act of 2019, which ordered that inmate educational and vocational training programmes should be made available to the inmates of the Nigerian Correctional Centres, the majority of the inmates do not participate in any rehabilitation programme. For example, in a study conducted in the Oyo State Correctional Command in 2020, over 90% of the inmates of Agodi and Oyo centres especially Awaiting Trial Inmates did not participate in rehabilitation programmes (Oyewo, 2021). Therefore, the Nigerian correctional institution still functions as a ‘carceral’ system, borrowing the words of Wacquant (2002), to control a ‘superfluous population’ rather than effective inmate rehabilitation. Therefore, a wide gap exists between Nigeria’s policy of inmate rehabilitation and the prevailing offender treatment at the correctional centres in the country.

Challenges of Inmate Rehabilitation Policy Implementation in Nigeria

Efforts to improve inmate rehabilitation in Nigeria have not yielded the desired results in the country, despite the passage of the Correctional Service Act in 2019. The Nigerian correctional system, in the words of Mbembe (2001) remains a prominent force in the process of subjecting Nigerians rather than being used as an instrument of correction. Inmate rehabilitation in Nigeria, therefore remains largely in the realm of aspiration.

The use of imprisonment as a preferred sentencing option in Nigeria without reference to the capacity to reform not only constitutes stress on the correctional system but also undermines the state’s capacity to maintain security which is a natural precondition for socio-economic development all over the world. Therefore, the lack of symmetry between the state capacity for inmate rehabilitation and the ever-increasing number of inmates in Nigerian correctional centres has made the prisons in Nigeria constitute a security risk to ordinary peace-loving Nigerians. In the words of Omotola (2016), adequate state capacity is an essential foundation for state effectiveness in the discharge of its core functions.

Similarly, Osaghae (2010) concludes that Nigeria is in the category of states which have not been able to demonstrate sufficient capacity to handle their affairs. These states have variously been labelled as failed states, weak states, failing states, collapsed states etc. He went further to assert that Nigeria, like most sub-Saharan states has weak regulatory and conflict management institutions, including the police and other security forces, credible judicial structure and access to justice, all of which encourage resort to conflict-ridden, violent, non-systematic and extra-constitution mode of grievance articulation and redress seeking. For this article, therefore, the factors of policy under-performance or failure shall be interrogated about the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in Nigeria.

Policy Under-performance/Failure and Inmate Rehabilitation in Nigeria

There seems to be agreement among scholars in Nigeria about the under-performance and, or failure of public policies as a means of addressing societal challenges because the government remains largely unable to positively address societal challenges through its numerous policies. Put differently, the extent to which a policy can be adjudged to have under-performed failed or succeeded is dependent on how far the policy has met its goals and the reasons for which it was formulated. Nevertheless, reasons adduced for policy underperformance or outright failure are multifarious and sometimes conflicting. For example, Yahaya & Abdullahi (2016) identify ethnic diversity as a serious impediment to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in Nigeria. This position was buttressed by Joseph (1991). According to him, “most students of Nigerian politics have had to grapple, not only with the phenomenon of vertically segmented groups but also with the even more daunting realisation that such identities became highly salient to political affairs and the activities of government bodies”. Therefore, ethnic/tribal factors underlie the policy process” or policy circle in the country.

Regarding inmate rehabilitation policy in Nigeria, different imprisonment practices existed in different parts of the country in the pre-colonial era and these practices largely influenced prison practices until 1968 when the Native prisons were abolished to pave the way for the unification of the Nigerian Correctional Service. Tribal factors influence inmate rehabilitation in several ways. For example, Oyewo (2021) observed that language barriers constitute a major impediment to the rehabilitation policy in correctional centres.

Also, the prison population in Nigeria exhibits a low level of literacy (NBS, 2016) and most rehabilitation programmes, especially skills and vocational training are conducted in local languages thereby making it difficult for non-native inmates to benefit from available rehabilitation programmes. Likewise, inmates of the Nigerian correctional centres also exhibit the character of the general population in Nigeria. In this direction, the factors of tribalism, favouritism and nepotism are replicated among the inmates of the Nigerian correctional centres and this influences the power relations in the correctional centres in a manner that isolates minority groups (Oyewo, 2021).

Similarly, Agagu & Omotoso (2010) identify the influence of policy actors who they described as political and bureaucratic office holders in the policy process as a major bane of effective policy formulation and implementation. For them, the nature of the state in Nigeria which, for all purposes and intent, is a neo-colonial structure affects the 'publicness' of public policies in Nigeria. It is perhaps on this basis that Tatalo-Alamu (2009) maintains that "the character of a society is, in the final analysis, a reflection of the character of its elites... if Nigeria has become a liveable hellhole; a post-colonial inferno of disturbed citizens, it is because the elite has made it so".

About the Nigerian Correctional Service, the ruling class, particularly, lawmakers in Nigeria (at the national and state levels), perhaps due to the influence of prolonged military rule, are still fond of making nearly all crimes punishable through imprisonment in the country. For example, environmental and road traffic offences such as street hawking/trading, reckless driving, drunkenness etc. are still punishable by imprisonment in contemporary Nigeria.

Sabatier (1998) also pays attention to the crisis of public policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. He argues that external factors such as the constitutional structure and socio-cultural values, affect the policy cycle, thus facilitating either the success or failure of any given policy. In a related development, Parkinson (2004) gives another perspective as to why policies fail while arguing about the deliberative process. According to him, the failure or success of any given policy is influenced by its institutional setting and the extent to which a deliberative approach is used in the policy cycle. He contends that adequate collaboration between the state and institutions saddled with policy implementation at various key points in the policy process, is required to engender a successful policy cycle. In Nigeria, there exist both legal and social impediments to the successful implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy. In addition to the negative impact of stigmatisation on Nigerians who have experienced incarceration in the country, legal barriers, especially in the area of recruitment, oftentimes, reduce ex-inmates job opportunities.

The centralised nature of the Nigerian Correctional Service does not allow the diversity of the country to reflect in the process of rehabilitation, whereas, successful community re-entry necessitates good communication between the community and institutional corrections (Serin, 2005). While the state governments in the country have, by the 2019 Correctional Service Act, been granted some responsibilities in the operations of the correctional service, for example, community service management, administrative bottlenecks still militate against the participation of the second-tier government in the process of inmate rehabilitation, thereby depriving rehabilitation idea the possible benefit of the initiative and funding from the state government. Therefore, the design, implementation and funding of rehabilitation ideas remain over-centralised.

Furthermore, the lack of cordiality between public policy and research has been identified as one of the major reasons public policies in Nigeria and other developing countries hardly achieve intended goals (Ajakaiye & Roberts (1997). Similarly, Olomola (2005) opines that the research and policy community in Nigeria work at cross-purposes and the problem is growing. Most policies in Nigeria are not research driven and this reduces the capacity of government to positively affect the lives of the people. It is on this basis that UNESCO (2007) observes that a strong commitment to a more dynamic and better-integrated research-policy nexus has normative significance. The inmate rehabilitation idea in Nigeria is not research-driven. For example, contrary to the outcome of evidence-based research that revealed the greater performance of inmate rehabilitation programmes that address causes of offences (Serin, 2005), inmate rehabilitation programmes are not tailored towards inmate criminogenic needs (Oyewo, 2021).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Implementing effective inmate rehabilitation policies in Nigeria will require a holistic and sustained effort involving various stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organisations, and the communities. Several factors, both internal and external, negatively impact the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in Nigeria as provided in the 2019 Correctional Service Act. However, bridging the gap between policy output and outcome concerning the policy on inmate rehabilitation in Nigeria will require additional efforts in the following areas:

Staff Training: Every category of employees of the Nigerian Correctional Service must be trained to come to terms with the corrective purpose of imprisonment, and to imbibe modern rehabilitation techniques and principles that have proven effective over the years. In this direction, rehabilitation practices in Nigerian correctional centres should be research-driven.

Assessment and Classification of inmates: To reduce the possibility of the correctional centres serving as vectors for crimes, there is a need for a system to assess inmates' needs, risks, and strengths for classification into appropriate groups.

Removal of Legal and Social Barriers: Inmate rehabilitation does not end without effective reintegration. To this extent, both the government and the organised private sector should be encouraged to eliminate employment barriers against ex-offenders. This will assist them in putting various academic qualifications and vocational skills they acquired before or during their incarceration into positive use. To achieve this, efforts on pre-release counselling and other forms of support should be encouraged. Closely related to this is the need for monitoring and evaluation of the progress of rehabilitation. This will assist in making timely interventions where necessary and make adjustments based on outcomes and feedback.

Improved Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Legal Reforms: The Nigerian Correctional Service has a long history of partnering with NGOs in the area of welfare, training and legal services. However, the closed-system approach of the correctional service often reduces the access to the inmates by the NGOs. In addition, legal reform is required to revisit sentencing practices in the country. In this direction, every role player should be involved in the process of reforming the country's criminal justice system. The Nigerian correctional service should also continue to seek local and international partnerships and learn from the experiences of other countries with successful rehabilitation programmes.

Budget Allocation: there is a need for the allocation of sufficient funds to support rehabilitation programmes and infrastructure improvements in Nigerian correctional centres. In addition to improved funding from the federal government, state authorities in Nigeria should also be encouraged to prioritise supporting rehabilitation programmes in correctional centres in their domain.

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