



CORRECTIONAL PERSONNEL' ATTITUDES AS INDICATORS OF RECIDIVISM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Correctional personnel' attitudes may have an impact on Nigerian prisoners' propensity to commit crimes again after being released from prison, which has hampered the inmates' successful rehabilitation and reintegration. This study looked at correctional staff' attitudes as indicators of recidivism in Nigeria. The results verified that the recidivism rate may still be impacted by officers' predominately punitive rather than rehabilitative views. . Corrupt practices may be a predictor of recidivism in the research region and significantly influence the attitudes of correctional staff. It is well known that supporting the desired change and trends to lower recidivism requires correctional authorities to have positive attitudes. However, among other factors, a high recidivism rate in Nigeria is predicted by the unfavourable attitude of correctional officials. As a result, in Nigerian correctional management, correctional officials must exhibit a great degree of empathy and employ rehabilitative techniques such non-custodial methods.

KEYWORDS: Inmates, Correctional personnel, Attitude, Correctional institution, Reoffending

INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research demonstrates the interactions between correctional officials and prisoners (Ajah et al., 2026) and how these interactions impact the results of correctional rehabilitation and reintegration (Onyejegbu et al., 2024). Because of their interactions with the convicts, it is crucial to comprehend the attitudes of correctional staff in order to run the system effectively. The most prevalent front-line employees who often deal with prisoners are correctional officers. It's interesting to note that convicts' quality of life both within and outside of prison walls may be significantly impacted by their connections with correctional officials (Ajah, 2026).

One could argue that the institutional and legal frameworks controlling the treatment of prisoners are regularly broken by correctional authorities, particularly in poor nations like Nigeria. The Nigerian Correctional Service Act of 2019, the Nelson Mandela Rules, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and other international guidelines for correctional administration are some of these tools (Monehin, 2021; Beatrice, 2020). Furthermore, it has been recognised that balancing punitive and rehabilitative correctional measures is one of the mentally taxing aspects of a correctional officer's work (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Correctional officials in Nigeria operate in an adverse environment. If officers are underpaid, forced to buy or construct their own uniforms, and denied benefits and privileges, their work ethic may decrease (Akpan, 2022; Elechi et al. 2018). Therefore, it is becoming more and more important to comprehend how and to what degree the attitudes of correctional officials affect the likelihood that convicts would conduct crimes again after being released—a subject of current scientific interest. Researchers are still motivated to look into the causes of the high incidence rate due to the substantial negative consequences of recidivism (Yukhnenko et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020). Recidivism has grown to be a major issue on a global scale that threatens the credibility and effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Johnson, 2017). The criminal justice system favours corrections over incarceration because of the conviction that prisoners will undergo rehabilitation and reintegration into society to contribute to meaningful progress (Cochran and Mears, 2017). This doesn't appear to be the case either, since a large number of ex-offenders endanger public safety and resources by re-entering correctional facilities as recidivists (Oruta & Luyt, 2022). Research indicates that recidivism rates remain high in many nations (Mayowa, 2024; Yukhnenko et al., 2023; Connor, 2021; Leigh, 2020). Nearly half of those



released in 2012 (46%) were sent back to prison within five years due to parole or probation violations or a new term in the United States (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). Within two years of their release, 51.7% of Australian inmates went back to obtain correctional services (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2024). According to Abrifor et al. (2012), 81% of male and 45% of female Nigerian prisoners were arrested again within 36 months after their release from correctional facilities. According to Osayi (2013), Nigeria's recidivism rate rose from 37.3% in 2005 to 52.4% in 2010. However, conflicting information about Nigeria's recidivism rate can be found in a number of publications (Omoruyi & Agbontaen, 2024).

Statistics sources show that at least one in five ex-offenders worldwide have recidivated, despite the lack of universally accepted measures for assessing recidivism across various systems and nations (Yukhnenko et al., 2023). Recidivists are also thought to be the primary cause of the rise in the global crime rate, according to Yukhnenko et al. (2023). This pattern essentially shows an unacceptably high recidivism rate, meaning that a significant number of present and future crimes are likely to be committed by ex-offenders alone (Banwo, 2021).

Additionally, both wealthy and poor countries bear a significant social and economic expense due to high recidivism rates (Bowen, 2020). This is due to the fact that it makes it more difficult to prevent crime, jeopardises public safety, escalates human rights violations, puts a burden on public funds to maintain overcrowded jails, and erodes public confidence in the criminal justice system (Loeffler et al., 2022). For example, the Nigerian government spent more than ₦1 million feeding each of the 76,000 prisoners across custodial centers, while the Australian taxpayer incurred a \$2 billion increase in prison construction and maintenance costs, totalling more than \$6 billion in the last year (Schlicht, 2023; Odeyemi, 2023). As a result, it seems that while the same criminals continue to pose a threat to public safety, public monies and resources may have been squandered on the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. This could therefore help with investigations into the causes of high recidivism rates, which are still a major problem in the criminal justice system.

Numerous studies have connected recidivism to a variety of issues. High recidivism rates are caused by a number of characteristics, including criminal history, age upon discharge, and geographic location (Van Duin et al., 2021; Frederick & Roy, 2003). High recidivism rates are also caused by peer pressure, substance abuse, stigmatisation and discrimination, a lack of aftercare services or reintegration support programs (Quinn-Hogan, 2021; Cannonier et al., 2021; Karlsson & Haeansson, 2022; Tan & Zapryanova, 2022; Otu, 2015). Similarly, research has linked recidivism to both unemployment and illiteracy (Bowen, 2020; Esparza Flores, 2018). Goche and Abadi (2018) also noted familial problems (loss of love and affection, inattentive supervision, divorce, and death of one or both parents) and economic problems (poverty, unemployment, substandard living circumstances). Furthermore, psychological elements are known to have a substantial impact on recidivism (Goodley et al., 2022). The attitudes of correctional authorities can exacerbate or influence recidivism issues despite the previously indicated research and causes; nevertheless, there is currently insufficient research in this area. Our endeavor's primary objective was to close this knowledge gap.

A CONCEPTUAL SUMMARY OF THE ATTITUDES OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF

The literature analysis is further grounded in the subtleties of correctional officials' viewpoints in order to bolster the primary goal of this study. The taught inclination to regularly react favourably or unfavourably to a specific thing is known as attitude (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2016; Schwarz et al., 2006). Since correctional staff workers are the ones who interact with offenders the most, their attitudes surely have an impact on their behavioural outcomes (Brown et al., 2019). Correctional officials still struggle to encourage pro-punishment attitudes despite the jail environment gradually shifting back to a rehabilitation paradigm (Siqueira Cassiano & Ricciardelli, 2023; Oberholtzer, 2023). The correctional approach is severe, heartless, and unsupportive of rehabilitation, according to a number of media reports (Vickovic et al., 2013; Welsh et al., 2011; Larivière, 2001).

Correctional officials must, however, balance punitive and rehabilitative correctional methods in a workplace that has been characterised as psychosocially demanding (Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Recent research indicates that officers have negative perceptions about rehabilitation (Martinez-Iñigo, 2021). Beliefs and actions that favour a harsher penal setting over one that encourages rehabilitation are associated with negative attitudes (Cassiano, 2024). Additionally, it has been alleged that correctional staff members are cynical, dictatorial, and gloomy about their jobs (Kjelsberg et al., 2007; Larivière, 2001). Instead of encouraging rehabilitation and crime prevention through successful



reintegration, some correctional staff members frequently think that the main goal of correctional facilities is to provide passive detention of criminals (Kifer et al., 2003). These unfavourable attitudes appear to be more prevalent in jails that place less emphasis on rehabilitation than in establishments that place a greater emphasis on such objectives, according to Kifer et al. (2003). This is important because the attitudes of correctional staff may have a direct effect on inmates' ability to adapt to prison life (Vuolo & Kruttschnitt, 2008). O'Donnell (2020) asserts that individuals facing legal difficulties typically alter their behaviour when they feel that the treatment or attitude toward them is fair, but they resist change and probably get worse when they feel that it is unjust. According to Abdul-Salam et al. (2023), inmates' negative perceptions of the attitudes of correctional staff are so strong that they could hinder rehabilitation. According to a qualitative study on reintegration and reentry programs for African American males in Harris County, Texas, USA, the views of offenders and their contacts with parole officers are crucial elements of a program's success (Johnson, 2020).

Positive viewpoints, on the other hand, demonstrate that convicts are people with rights that ought to be upheld and the capacity to transform for the better (Schultz, 2023). Howells (2000) examined the relationship between recidivism and the prison psychosocial environment (PSE). Correctional staff with high empathy were more likely to engage in criminal rehabilitation programs and encourage inmates to do so, according to one of the Howells tests. The study found that senior correctional officers had a more positive attitude toward prisoners than junior ones. However, another study's results revealed that correctional officers with less than a year's experience had far more positive attitudes than those with more experience (Larivière & Robinson, 1996; Granados et al., 2023). The opinions of correctional authorities can be influenced by a variety of reasons. According to Misis et al. (2013), correctional officers who had a positive attitude toward convicts were more committed to the goals of correctional services, had greater support for rehabilitation, reported far lower levels of job stress, and were generally content in their positions. Additionally, it was shown that the majority of correctional staff members surveyed supported inmate rehabilitation (Misis et al., 2013). According to Misis et al. (2013), female police officers were more open to rehabilitation when it came to empathy and punishment. Furthermore, research revealed that compared to other correctional authorities, correctional officers had higher negative opinions (Misis et al., 2013). According to Kjelsberg et al. (2007), correctional officers who worked in female-only prisons had more positive opinions than those who worked in male-only prisons. Forry et al. (2019) claim that correctional officials are more understanding and have more positive attitudes toward offenders with mental health issues. Because they believe their behaviours are deliberate and should be punished rather than reformed, officers often harbour hostility toward other inmates who are not mentally ill (Forry et al., 2019). Correctional officials who link the crime to the individual are more likely to support rehabilitative efforts than those who attribute it to situational or socioeconomic factors (Santorso, 2021). penitentiary officers' perceptions are being influenced by politically motivated punishment regulations and procedures directed at political opponents, according to a recent survey of Danish penitentiary officers (Damsa, 2023). According to a study conducted in the United States on the experiences of former inmates with misconduct by correctional officers, the negative attitudes of correctional officers were primarily focused on medical neglect, the use of violent punishment, and the smuggling of contraband; however, these attitudes varied significantly between male and female officers (Novisky et al., 2022). According to a study published in Taxes USA, young male police officers and those without familial support at home were also more inclined than other officers to put up with the mistreatment of inmates. Officers also fail to notice boundary violations between staff and inmates when their colleagues are involved (Worley et al., 2019). The attitudes of Nigerian correctional staff have been found to be impacted by unfavourable working conditions and a lack of government commitment (Akpan, 2022; Elechi et al. 2018).

Correctional officers in Norway, on the other hand, use a system that seeks to heal and rehabilitate criminals through a range of programs that encourage their reintegration into society and lower recidivism. Healthcare, job training, educational opportunities, and community connections are some of these programs (Jones, 2021). Inmates are more likely to succeed after being released back into society when correctional staff members have a positive outlook on rehabilitation and encourage them to take part in these programs (Andvig et al., 2020). It has been suggested that the positive attitudes of correctional authorities are crucial in promoting change prior to a successful release from a custodial facility (Martinez-Iñigo, 2021).

The limited studies that have been done on correctional staff attitudes toward convicts and recidivism have mostly concentrated on Western nations. Correctional staff attitudes as a predictor of recidivism in Nigeria have not been examined in any published research. In Nigeria and throughout Africa, there hasn't been much research done on



correctional views toward inmate treatment and rehabilitation, as well as variables influencing recidivism. Nevertheless, the impact of correctional staff attitudes on recidivism has not consistently been the focus of these investigations. Inmates' attitudes toward rehabilitation, for example, are mostly unaffected by the attitudes of correctional personnel, according to a Nigerian study on the subject (Alao & Adebawale, 2014). This may be the outcome of the depersonalising attitudes of the correctional staff, which cause a social gap between them and the prisoners. Additionally, a separate study found that Nigerian correctional officials actively took part in prisoner rehabilitation initiatives (Osagie & Omigie, 2023). Lower socioeconomic drivers and the social and cultural exclusion of ex-offenders are the primary factors influencing recidivism in the study area, according to another Nigerian study that examined the social factors that predicted recidivism among specific inmates in a correctional facility (Nnam et al., 2023).

In a similar vein, a Ghanaian study that examined the reasons behind recidivism found that the prison's overcrowding has an impact on the inmates' interaction with correctional officials, which fosters mistrust (Baffour, 2020). There is a research gap because none of these studies looked at the impact of correctional staff opinions on recidivism. With an emphasis on Nigeria's criminal justice system, this validated the study's significance in furthering scientific research on recidivism predictors from the viewpoint of correctional officials.

SUMMARY OF REOFFENDING

The impact of correctional guards' perspectives on recidivism has not been fully examined, despite the fact that recidivism in general is a fairly current and researched topic in the criminal justice system. It's interesting to note that because of its intricacy, defining recidivism has proven difficult (Bendlin et al., 2022). Depending on their surroundings and acknowledged indications, many nations, organisations, and academics have conceptualised and operationalised the meaning and application of recidivism.

Even though recidivism is typically defined as continuous, chronic, or career offending that involves reoffending behaviours and a pro-criminal lifestyle, Schoeman (2010) argues that it must be conceptualised scientifically to enable standardised measurement and analysis. Entzminger (2020) claims that rather than being predicated on a criminal conviction, the main definition of recidivism in the US criminal justice system is the re-arrest of former inmates by law enforcement officials. Hunt and Dumville (2016) defined recidivism as the rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration of an individual who has previously served a custodial or non-custodial term and undergone treatment. This definition differs from the one provided to the US Sentencing Commission. According to this definition, an offender is considered to have relapsed into crime when they are arrested for the second time or more; reincarceration is not a prerequisite for becoming a recidivist (Baffour, 2020). Recidivism, for example, refers to going back to prison after committing a new crime (Nguyen et al., 2011). The word utilised in other studies has its roots in reoffending. Recidivism is defined in the literature as relapses of criminal behaviour by a person who is known to have committed at least one prior offence; this broadly includes reoffending, rearrest, reconviction, and reimprisonment (O'Donnell, 2020; Anderson and Skardhamar, 2015).

According to Schoeman (2010), Payne (2007), Yukhnenko et al. (2023), and other definitions, not all recidivism research concentrates only on reoffending but also considers other intervening variables and indicators associated with the goal of the research, the participating institutions, and the study's location. The target group of offenders (e.g., juvenile or adult offenders, etc.), the indicator or counting event upon which the measurement is based, and the observation period of the reoffending behaviour before recidivism can be measured are some of the contextual issues that have been highlighted by some of the measuring indices in the literature (Navarro-Pérez et al., 2020; O'Donnell, 2020; Zapryanova, 2020). To define the boundaries for understanding and assessing the phenomenon, several academics have offered arguments based on recidivism data sources, such as self-reported data, police data, court data, or correctional data (Yukhnenko et al., 2023; Chen & Meyer, 2020). Several researchers have also focused on the context and goal of recidivism research in order to determine the prevalence rate of recidivism, look into the factors that contribute to recidivism, or evaluate the efficacy of interventions meant to lessen criminal justice (Fenimore & Jennings, 2021; Yukhnenko et al., 2023; Goodley et al., 2021; Beaudry et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Schoeman (2002), the primary considerations before determining the concept of recidivism are the type and severity of the crime, the character of the criminal conduct, including whether it was a new or repeat offence, the legality of the crime, the incarceration of the offender, and whether the criminal behaviour has turned into a habit or a profession. For example, recidivism is defined by Rhodes et al. (2013) as being arrested again for a serious crime, having their



parole revoked, or having both. Relapses into less serious offences, such as movement infractions or disturbing the peace, are not included in this category (Baffour, 2020).

The definitions of recidivism provided by Schoeman (2010: 91) and Baffour (2020: 4) will be used in this study since they provide a framework for categorising criminals as recidivists that has been empirically confirmed. "Recidivism is a behaviour pattern or process in which a criminal who has previously been found guilty of a crime and sentenced by a court of law commits another unspecified offence (during the survival period), is found guilty of this offence, and is given another undetermined sentence by a court of law. Baffour (2020:4) defines recidivism as "a process involving imprisonment, release from the correctional facility, re-offense, rearrest, reconviction and reimprisonment by a competent court of law after a person has been punished or treated for previous crime."

CONCLUSION

Human behaviour is unquestionably constantly influenced by social interactions and circumstances. Because correctional staff workers frequently interact with prisoners, their attitudes can have a significant impact on their behaviour, either favourably or negatively, which can either increase or decrease recidivism. Corrupt practices may be a predictor of recidivism in the research region and significantly influence the attitudes of correctional staff. It is well known that supporting the desired change and trends to lower recidivism requires correctional authorities to have positive attitudes. However, among other factors, a high recidivism rate in Nigeria is predicted by the unfavourable attitude of correctional officials. In Nigeria, correctional staff members must exhibit a high degree of empathy and employ non-custodial rehabilitation techniques. Monitoring the conduct of correctional officials in detention facilities and emphasising and enhancing accountability are among the proposals. To inspire correctional officials to work at their best, it is also essential to reorient and teach them on non-custodial measures and rehabilitation.

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