

# Explaining the Rational Behind Ex-Convicts Tendency to Revert Back to Crime in Port Harcourt

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**Abstract-** The prison is a correctional legal institute designed for the safe custody of the interned. Rehabilitation programmes for Ex-convicts are training platforms designed by government to reform and reintegrate ex-convicts back to society. Recidivating is the term that explains the reversion of an individual to criminal tendency after he/she have been convicted for a prior offence, sentenced and presumably corrected (maltz, 2001:1)

Rehabilitation programmes is operationalized and used in this study as community support, vocational training, employment placement, family ties and parole system.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Recidivism rate is increasing currently to about 37.4% (Global prison trend 2015). This has adverse consequences on society. Scholarly literature on recidivism indicates that causes of recidivism and consequences have been documented as seen in works of (Holiday et al, 2012; Borzydu, 2005, Aloudu, 2015, Alorifor, et al 2012).

Drawing on the work of Antwi (2015) who focused his work on establishing a link between rehabilitation programs for former criminals and recidivism in Ghana, this study will focus on prison rehabilitation programmes for former criminals and recidivism in Portharcourt, Rivers State Nigeria using the same variables as Antwi (2015). The change of study location will test established knowledge to determine universality.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Investigating the nexus between rehabilitation programs for ex-convict and recidivism in Rivers State.

Specific objectives are:

1. To identify rehabilitation programs in Rivers State prisons

2. To ascertain the nexus between the employment of ex-convict and recidivism
3. To establish a link between family ties of ex-convicts and recidivism
4. To examine the nexus between the vocational skills acquired by ex-convicts and recidivism
5. To explore whether the existence of parole system would reduce the occurrence of recidivism.

In order to understand and explain these facts we need to first examine rehabilitation programs available in rivers state prisons as well as the effects of employment, acquired vocational skills, family ties and parole system on recidivism

The area is restricted to prisons locate within Rivers State as found in Port Harcourt, Degema, Ahoada and Elele while the subject scope is restricted to looking at rehabilitation program in Rivers State prisons and their impacts on recidivism.

## THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The rehabilitation theory as propounded by Jean Hampton is considered appropriate for this study as it emphasizes the use of rehabilitation programs as an effective tool in reducing recidivism. It also extrapolates that the penal system should be used for punishment and correction. According to him people get involved in crime without guilt and that since people are not born criminals then it is possible to restore a criminal to a useful life in order for them to contribute positively to personal and societal development.

Reformation theory is also used in this study because it stipulates that the objective of imprisonment should be to reform the offender. It is based on the humanistic principle that even an offender commits a crime, he does not cease to be human being. He may have committed the crime under circumstances which

might never occur again. Therefore an effort should be made to reform him during the period of his incarceration through provision of education and skill acquisition during the period of his imprisonment so that he may be able to start his life again after his release from prison. The major basis of this theory is the complete reformation of inmates in penal institutions so that they are transformed into law abiding citizens (Mamie, 2006)

#### THE CONCEPT OF REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Prison has four major purposes. These purposes are retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, restoration and rehabilitation. Retribution means punishment for crimes against society. Depriving criminals of their freedom is a way of making them pay a debt to society for their crimes. Most people think of prisons as nothing more than facilities where criminals are incarcerated and deprived of their freedom while serving a sentence for a crime. While this is true, the concept of imprisonment is also intended to rehabilitate the prisoners. Prisons in Nigeria is a correctional legal institution designed for the safe keeping of the legally interned. It helps to ensure that criminals are reformed, rehabilitated and adequately brought back into society (Iwariemie – Jaja, 2014). Nigeria prisons have witnessed an increased level of recidivism as a result of poor reintegration of released inmates which can also lead to increase in crime rate (Iwarimie – Jaja, 2015). The Nigerian Prison Service, departments of the federal Government in-charge of the management of prisons and prison inmates have derailed in its responsibilities as a result of negligence and poor funding of correctional institution. Abuchi (2015) contends that these failures is what led to bad rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of ex-convict back into society and therefore goes back to prison (Iwarimie – Jaja, 2014).

The reason for incarceration is to isolate criminals from those things that cause them to engage in criminal behaviors. The penitentiary (prison) institution is therefore a tool used for the transformation of a criminal into an obedient and law abiding citizen. It takes into lawful custody those certified by courts of competence jurisdiction, producing suspects in court as at when due and

setting in motion mechanisms for their incarceration and training for eventual re-entry into community as obedient, law abiding citizens on discharge (Nigeria prison service, 2009). In Nigeria re-offenders statistics has grown to be a more serious social problem. Statistics shows that recidivism among inmates was 37.39. 2010 but over the years it has risen to 52.4% (Alorifor et al, 2012, Muoghlu, 2012). 81% male offenders and 46% female offenders in Nigeria committed crimes and were taken back into prison within 36months after being released from prison. Several scholars contented the factors accounting for recidivism to include: premature release from prison supervision and monitoring prior to any meaningful rehabilitation (Dissei and WKY, 2014) harsh prison and damaging environment that fail to prepare individuals properly for reintegration into society, inadequate support for reintegration when released from prison, poor attitude of the public towards ex-convict, stigmatization of prisoners (Soyombo, 2009) discriminatory and defective character of prison system which promotes neglect of criminals inducing influencing ideas (Ugwuoke, 2010) drinking of spirit and hard drugs, poor education and bad friends of similar character influence to (Osayi, 2013). All these promotes recidivism but the most recognized is inadequate rehabilitation in the following areas:

1. Education rehabilitation for inmates- Education Programs helps to give inmates a second chance. Educated inmates were less likely to commit a crime and return back to prison.
2. Employment rehabilitation for inmates- Inability to find and maintain work is a main factor in recidivism. There are job training to prepare inmate for life after prison that'll help them to find and keep employment.
3. Counseling rehabilitation for inmates – counseling in vocational, academic, social and personal topics. This helps them to consider new skills and develop new insights into their goals and motivations. Counseling on issues bordering on depression, stress or substance in building a positive step towards rehabilitation and in so doing take responsibility for their criminal behavior, change lifelong patterns of violence and addiction and build productive lives .
4. Wellness rehabilitation for inmates stress/ anger management techniques as well as physical,

Social and mental activities, biological and physical health, emotional and psychological wellness etc.

5. Vocational programs rehabilitation for inmates – vocational training and skills in masonry, carpentry, upholstery, metalwork, weaving, tailoring, dressmaking, hair making and agriculture. Technical skills such as plumbing, Electricity, Landscaping etc. are also provided. These trainings give them a glimmer of hope that they can escape the cycle of poverty and violence that have dominated their lives. It reduces inmates risk of recidivism by teaching them marketable skills they can use to find and maintain employment following release from prison.
6. Religious programs rehabilitation for inmates – according to Haeren (2010) prisoners are engaged in religious practice in their rehabilitation so as to gain direction and meaning in one's life, improve one's concept of self, promote personal behavioral change, gain protection from God, meet other volunteers and obtain prison resources.
7. Agricultural rehabilitation for inmates - prisoners are equipped with basic knowledge of farming which they can use to earn a living upon release. It reduces recidivism by teaching them farming skills such as community gardening, compost manure making, poultry farming, fishery farming etc.

#### FACTORS OF RECIDIVISM

There are many factors that contribute to increases in recidivism rates. These include such personal characteristics as age, gender, race, length and severity of criminal history, education, skill level and conduct in prison. Others are discrimination and stigmatization, lack of after care services or reintegration support programmes, structural and substance abuse, peer influence, gender and age at the time of incarceration, employment, housing, lack of family support, inadequate rehabilitation programs, lack of vocational training, inadequate level of education, no employment mile support, poor public attitude to ex- convicts among others.

For the purpose of this study, are going to study the effect of the following factors on recidivism.

1. Employment and recidivism

2. Vocational training and recidivism
3. Parole system and recidivism
4. Family ties and recidivism
5. Rehabilitation programs and recidivism.

#### HYPOTHESIS

1. The more ex-convicts are employed the less likely recidivism will occur
2. The closer the bond between ex-convicts and their families, the less likely the ex-convicts will re-offend.
3. There is a relationship between the acquisition of vocational skills by ex-convicts and recidivism.
4. The existence of parole system is likely to reduce recidivism.

#### METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopted cross-sectional survey design.

Population: The population of the study consists of the seven hundred and eight (708) recidivists and all the ex-convicts in River State whose population size could not be done ascertained at the time of this research.

Samples size and sampling Techniques: The study made use of Multi-stage random sampling techniques. The Snowball sampling techniques was also adopted to reach ex-convicts who are not recidivists.

Sample size for the recidivists is two hundred and fifty six (256) drawn from the total population of seven hundred and eight (708) using Taro Yamane formula while snowball sampling techniques was adopted to select one hundred and two ex-convicts

Method of Data Collection The study adopted the use of structured questionnaires and interviews in collecting data from the respondents

Method of Data Analysis Table and pie charts were used in presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents while Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to test the hypotheses

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

- Presentation of Data

Table 1.1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Sex

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
1.	Male	306	89.0
2.	Female	38	11.0
	Total	344	100

Table 1.2 Distributions of Respondents by Educational Qualification

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
1.	No Formal Education	87	25.3
2.	Primary	91	26.5
3.	Secondary	129	37.5
4.	Tertiary	37	10.7
	Total	344	100

VOCATIONAL SKILLS ACQUIRED WHILE IN PRISON CUSTODY

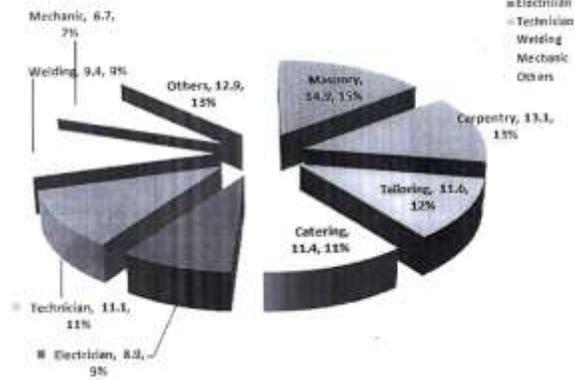


Figure 1.1: Pie Chart showing the vocational skills acquired while in prison custody

Table 1.3 Sources of Support after first release from prison

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
1.	Friends	43	12.6
2.	Relatives (Family)	58	16.9
3.	Both friends and relatives (family)	89	25.9
4.	Criminal associate	136	39.4
5.	Community	18	5.2
	Total	344	100

Table 1.4 Respondent's (recidivists) reason for retuning to criminal activity

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
	Reasons for returning back to Criminal activity		
1.	Love of negative public image	10	2.9
2.	Lack of Opportunities to be Gainfully employed	112	44.3
3.	Lack of acceptance into family and community	15	5.9
4.	Discrimination by people in Society	31	12.3
5.	Continuing acquaintance with old Criminal associates friends	36	14.2
6.	Lack of finance to start up a Legitimate livelihood	59	23.3
	Total	253	100

Table 1.5 Respondents' perception of the necessary for a parole system

S/N	VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGES (%)
1.	Do you consider the parole system as necessary for the rehabilitation of ex-convicts?		
	Yes	312	90.7
	No	32	9.3
	Total	344	100
2.	If yes, do you agree that the parole system should be included as part of prison rehabilitation programme?		
	Yes	293	93.8
	No	19	6.2
	Total	312	100

Table of data analysis from section B of the questionnaire.

Table 1.6: section II: below are list of statements, indicating whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) or strongly disagree (SD).

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
(a) Is there a relationship between employment and reoffending?					
1.	Provision of employment will make ex-convicts not to commit crime again.	183	124	23	14
2.	Skilled recidivists are more likely to be discriminated against during employment.	18	25	128	173
(b) Is there relationship between family-ties and reoffending?					
3.	Close family-ties is likely to reduce reoffending	142	148	36	18
4.	Poor family-ties is likely to reduce reoffending	40	20	132	152
(c) Is there relationship between vocational training and reoffending?					
5.	Ex-convicts without skills are likely to relapse into criminal activities.	175	138	20	11
6.	Unemployed persons who are ex-convicts are likely to commit more crimes.	15	21	142	166

(d) Can the existence of the parole system reduce the occurrence of recidivism					
7.	As a measure of reducing the burden of your penalty, will you like to be released but under supervision?	159	161	20	4
8.	Granting me freedom under supervision will make me commit more crime	6	20	157	161
(e) To examine the relationship between rehabilitation programmes and recidivism					
9.	Thorough rehabilitation and training programmes could prevent re-offending after jail term	192	124	15	13
10.	I was rehabilitated but it did not prevent my re-offending	21	21	176	126

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Table 1.6: Hypothesis One: The more ex-convicts are employed, the less likely recidivism will occur

Variable	Correlation	Employment	Re-offending
Employment	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.848**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Spearman's rho	N	344	344
	Correlation Coefficient	.848	1.000
Re-offending	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed). Source: Collated data 2017, computation from SPSS v. 20 Analysis.

The evidence from the analysis using Spearman Rank Order Correlation revealed that the above statement is true (where  $P < 0.05$  and  $\rho = .848$ ). The result indicated that given the employment of ex-convict, there will be a reduction in recidivism. As such the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.7: HYPOTHESIS Two: The closer the bond between ex-convicts and their family members, the less likely ex-convicts will reoffend.

Variable	Correlation	Family Ties	Re-offending
Family Ties	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Spearman's rho	N	344	344
	Correlation Coefficient	.793	1.000
Re-offending	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed). Source: Collated data 2017, computation from SPSS v. 20 Analysis.

The result revealed a positive relationship (where  $P < 0.05$  and  $\rho = .793$ ). The result indicated that the support offered by family members discourages ex-convicts from returning to crime. Given the result or outcome, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1.8: HYPOTHESIS Three: There is relationship between the acquisition of vocational skills of ex-convicts and recidivism.

Variable	Correlation	Vocational Training	Re-offending
Vocational Training	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.904**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Spearman's rho	N	344	344
	Correlation Coefficient	.904	1.000
Re-offending	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed). Source: Collated data 2017, computation from SPSS v. 20 Analysis.

The result as show on the table 1.8 revealed that there is a relationship between vocational skills of ex-convicts and recidivism (where  $P < 0.05$  and  $\rho = .904$ ). The result indicated that the acquisition of vocational skills will go a long way in ensuring that ex-convicts have lower tendency for returning to crime.

Hypothesis Four: The existence of parole system is likely to reduce recidivism

Variable	Correlation	Parole System	Re-offending
Parole System	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.844**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Spearman's rho	N	344	344
	Correlation Coefficient	.844	1.000
Re-offending	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	344	344

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2- tailed). Source: Collated data 2017, computation from SPSS v. 20 Analysis.

The evidence from the test revealed that parole system impact positively on recidivism (where  $P < 0.05$  and  $\rho = 0.844$ ). The result indicated that the existence of parole system is likely to reduce recidivism. Base on the result, the hypothesis is accepted.

#### DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

- The result revealed that the employment of ex-convicts, strong or close family ties of ex-convicts, existence of parole system and acquisition of vocational skills impact positively on recidivism.
- The findings corroborate that of Tripodu, Kins and Bender 2010, Berg and Huebner, 2011 and Antwi 2015), that rehabilitation programmes help in reducing recidivism.

#### SUMMARY

- The tests revealed that rehabilitation programs for ex-convicts have a significant effect on recidivism.
- The evidence generated from the study revealed that factors such as employment, strong family ties, vocational skills and parole system all significantly impact on recidivism and the tendency for ex-convicts to reoffend.
- In line with these observation all the alternate hypothetical statement were accepted.

#### CONCLUSION

- The result of the study therefore affirms that rehabilitation programmes for ex-convicts is a significant factor in reducing the likelihood of recidivism.
- In line with this observation, the study therefore concludes that employment placement of ex-convict, strong family ties of ex-convicts, acquisition of vocational skills and the existence of parole system contribute to a reduction in recidivism specifically in Rivers State.

#### RECOMMENDATION

- Having observed that rehabilitation programmes are germane to the reduction of recidivism, it is recommended that robust rehabilitation programmes be concluded in the present prison act. When this is done, its implementation will be taken more seriously and consequently reduce further the incidence of recidivism.
- The parole system should also be included in the prison rehabilitation programmes for prison inmates to prepare them for post imprisonment life.
- Strong family bonds or ties between ex-convicts and their family members must be maintained to ensure that they are helped to easily re-adjust back the normal life devoid of criminal behaviours. This can be done by providing necessary support emotionally, physically and materially. This will also prevent ex-convicts from reconnecting with their previous criminal friends, associates and acquaintances.

#### CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

- The study has affirmed through empirical evidence that rehabilitation programmes for ex-convicts are critical in the reduction of recidivism in Nigeria.

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