

***Education and the Rehabilitation of Youth Inmates in Correctional Centres in Cross River State, Nigeria***

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth inmate in correctional centres in Cross River State. The design used for the study, which was guided by a lone research question and hypothesis, was the ex- post facto. A sample size of 482 inmates was purposively selected from the six correctional centres in the state. A validated 10-item questionnaire instrument with a reliability index of .98 was developed and used to collect data. The data collected was analyzed using percentage and simple regression. The findings show that there is no significant relationship between education and the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State. Based on the finding, it was recommended, among others, that government should fully fund educational programmes in the correctional centres; and that the government should employ the services of only qualified teachers in the correctional centres just like it is done in the mainstream educational system.*

**Keywords:** rehabilitation, education, youth, inmates, correctional centres

**Introduction**

Youth make up a very important segment of any nation. They are energetic, adventurous, and regarded as the future of a nation. A disciplined, focused, and law-abiding youth can create a bright future for a nation; while a lawless, indulgent, and violent youth is a threat to a nation's peace and security (Adamu, 2007). According to Adebayo (2013), youths are most volatile when their energies are misdirected or channeled into wrong endeavours. Circumstances like peer pressure, unemployment,

politics, and ignorance can force many youths into a life of crime. In every nation, crime is punishable by the laws of the land; if any offender is convicted by the law, he is sentenced to prison, now known as a correctional centre for rehabilitation.

Correctional centre is a place of confinement for groups of people with various behavioural patterns (Ngwu & Uche, 2021). A correctional centre can also be defined as a place of confinement designated by the laws of the land for the rehabilitation of people who violate the laws of the land and are convicted by the Criminal Justice System. The primary purpose of establishing correctional facilities all over the world, Nigeria inclusive, is not only for the retribution of criminals but also for their rehabilitation and reformation. The correctional centres also provide facility that separate the criminal from society thereby protecting the society from further criminal activities. The rehabilitation, as posited by Igbo (2007), should start from the very day they are received into the correctional centre to the day they are released.

Rehabilitation means different things to different people, depending on the perspective it is being examined. Ugwuoke and Ojonugwa (2014) defined rehabilitation as the reforming of the personality and behaviour of convicted offenders through well designed educational and/or therapeutic treatment, ensuring that individual offender is returned to society as a complete, self-supporting, and accepted member of society. For this paper rehabilitation is defined as a process of helping offenders, through counselling and education, to see the damage crime has done to them and the society, help them take an informed decision to stay off crime, better their lives and contribute to the good of the society upon their release back to the society. Tam and Heng (2008) opined that rehabilitation of offenders helps to improve their interpersonal skills and re-establish their confidence as they gain skills and knowledge needed to secure employment when freed from prison. A prisoner without adequate rehabilitation opportunity through skills training and capacity building usually returns to society which has incarcerated him or her as a hardened enemy of that society. Such an ex-convict is often full of desire for vengeance (Uche et al., 2015).

Ifeoma (2012) posits that Education for All is a fundamental human right and therefore restriction (imprisonment) of one's freedom does not suspend that right. She further asserts that education is the brainchild of national development, and no development can take place without first developing the citizens of the country, prison inmates inclusive. According to Ajufo and Oseyemi (2007) as cited in Ifeoma (2012), with 80% of prisoners functionally illiterates, the best crime prevention programme of all is education. Prison education as expounded by Rhode (2004), cited in Adebola et al. (2018), is the education designed for prison inmates so that at the end of their prison term, they would have acquired skills, find meaningful and long-lasting employment. Adeyeye (2019) posited that prison education comprises different educationally based activities such as literacy programmes, secondary school equivalent programmes, vocational training, higher academic and general studies. Okoh et al. (2023) opined that

just as the introduction of drug education in school curriculum from the primary to the tertiary level by the Federal and State Ministries of Education is necessary, it is also a welcome development to introduce drug education to the inmates to help them understand the short-term and long-term danger of drug addiction/abuse to their health. It should be designed in such a way that as the inmate goes through rehabilitation, he gains a better understanding of the dangers of drugs. This may be achieved by the creation of good audio-visual instructional materials that will enhance learning, pasting of instructional materials on drugs in the correctional centres, and placing of billboards in strategic locations in the correctional centres. Denwigwe and Akpama (2013) revealed that the adolescent period is saddled with certain developmental problems and depending on how these problems are handled, the individuals may become well-adjusted or maladjusted in life.

According to Garcia (2013) cited in Aliyu and Mustaffa (2022), the three purposes of correctional education are to enhance inmates' chances of employment once released from prison by enriching their level of knowledge and skills. Secondly, it increases inmates' ability to think more responsibly; thirdly, it diminishes the inmates' odds of returning to prison by being more apt to be employed and making better decisions. Educational rehabilitation gives the inmates the opportunity to continue with their educational pursuit from where they stopped before their imprisonment and prison inmates who were involved in the educational rehabilitation programmes are less liable to commit a crime than those who did not participate (Olojede & Mohammed, 2020). Denwigwe et al. (2022a) noted that another aspect education should pay attention is the development of learners' social self-concept. They further explained social self-concept as the perception individuals hold about their society, including the norms, values, ethos, and cultural systems.

In their findings, Hawley et al. (2013) posit that prison education can help prisoners utilize their time purposefully. It brings about changes in the prisoners' personal attitudes and perceptions, address their gaps in basic skills, and also equip them with fundamental 'life' skill so that they are more employable at the end of their prison sentence. Also, Edward et al. (2024) noted that education that focuses on value orientation will help inmates develop virtues such as peace, love, humility, empathy, diligence, and good morals. Ifeanyichukwu and Ugwuoke (2015), carried out a study to investigate the role of education in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates of Jos prison. The findings of the study revealed that education for prisoners is very important in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates.

A study by Omoni and Ijeh (2009) on qualitative education for prisoners: a panacea to effective rehabilitation and integration into society, revealed that there was no relationship between prisoners' rehabilitation and formal education. Fabelo (2002) conducted a study on the impact of prison education on community reintegration of inmates: The Texas case. The findings of the study showed that inmates with the highest

education were more likely upon release to obtain employment, have higher wages and lower recidivism. Denwigwe et al. (2022) asserted that amenities like health facilities, good schools, good roads, constant electricity, portable water, security, employment opportunities and easy means of livelihood immensely contribute to meaningfulness in life, and if these things are not in place the tendency is for people especially the youth to engage in anti-social behaviour.

Regardless of the rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration programmes of the Nigeria Correctional Service to bring about positive behavioural changes in criminals, most criminals still return to the society as hardened criminals who are not amenable to corrections. Criminals that were less hardened leave the correctional centres more hardened and commit more crimes that will send them back to the correctional centres (Adetula et al., 2010). Chukwudi (2012) described the correctional centre as a school of crime and breeding ground for criminal socialization rather than a deterrent and reformation centre as seen in the high rate of recidivism and crime in the nation. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to determine the role of education in the rehabilitation of youths in correctional centres in Cross River State, Nigeria.

This study was anchored on some theories of rehabilitation. The Rational Emotive Behavioural theory was propounded by Albert Ellis in 1955. He believes that there are patterns in an individual's life that lead him to crime. These negative thoughts patterns or irrational beliefs that are likely to result in behavioural or emotional issues should be identified and replaced with a more or better rational thought patterns. Rational emotive behavioural theory helps in unconditional self-acceptance so that people avoid self-destructive judgment, acknowledge the possibility of mistakes as humans and make it right.

Another theory the study relied upon was the Utilitarian theory. This theory was propounded by Jeremy Bentham in 1789. The theory prescribes punishment for offenders to dissuade them from committing further crime. The theory is a consequential theory by nature that operates on three basic assumptions. First, it believes that punishment has repercussion for both the society and the offender. Second, the total benefit of the punishment should supersede the total evil, and lastly, specific punishment for criminal behaviour should be such that will deter similar or other criminal behaviours in the future from the criminal.

Rehabilitation is one of the reasons of punishment; the primary purpose of rehabilitation is to stop the offender from committing further crime by helping him or her to succeed within the confines of the law. The rehabilitation of criminals can be achieved through educational and vocational programmes. These equips the offender with intellectual skill and knowledge required in the competing labour market.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth in correctional centres in Cross River State.

### **Research question**

1. What is the extent of the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State?

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between education and the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the ex- post facto research design. The area of the study was Cross River State. The population of the study was 851 youth inmates from the six correctional centres in the state. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 482 youth inmates.

The instrument used for data collection was a 10-item questionnaire titled Role of Education and Rehabilitation of Inmates Questionnaire (RERIQ). The questionnaire had two sections - section A and B. Section A elicited information on the biodata of the inmates such as age, educational qualification, religion and gender while section B consisted of the educational rehabilitation programmes in the correctional centres. The four- point Likert scale questionnaire was used to elicit information on the relationship between education and the rehabilitation of youth inmates.

The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by two professionals in Guidance and Counselling and one expert from Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using the test-retest reliability method and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed a reliability coefficient of 0.98; this estimate was high therefore the research instrument was accepted as reliable. Simple percentage was employed to answer the research question while simple regression analysis was used in testing the hypothesis.

### **Presentation of results**

The results of research question 1 are presented in table 1 using simple percentage. The hypothesis of the study was tested at .05 level of significance.

**Research question 1:** What is the extent of the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State?

To answer this research question, responses to items 1-10 of the questionnaire were collated and analyzed. The findings of the analysis are shown in table 1.

**Table 1:** Reponses of respondents on the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth in correctional centres in Cross River State (N482)

S/N	Vocational skills	Responses				
		F	A %	F	D %	Total (%)
1.	Primary education	69	14	413	86	482 (100)
2	junior secondary education	78	16	404	84	482 (100)
3	Senior secondary education	40	8	442	92	482(100)
4	vocational education	130	27	352	73	482 (100)
5	technical education	80	17	402	83	482 (100)
6	recreational education	25	5	457	95	482 (100)
7	religious education	20	4	462	96	482 (100)
8	undergraduate tertiary education	45	9	437	91	482 (100)
9	master's tertiary education	0	0	482	100	48 (100)
10	Doctorate tertiary education	0	0	482	100	482 (100)

The result in table 1 shows that 69(14%) participated in primary education, while 413(86%) did not participate. Also, 78(16%) participated in junior secondary education, while 404(84%) did not participate. The result also indicates that 40(8%) participated in senior secondary education, while 442(92%) did not participate; 130(27%) participated in vocational education, while 352(73%) did not participate; 80(17%) participated in technical education while 402(83%) did not participate; Also 25(5%) participated in recreational education, while 457(95%) did not participate. Also, 20(4%) participated in religious education while 462 (96%) did not; 45(9%) agreed to undergraduate tertiary education while, 437(91%) did not participate; 0(0%) participated in master's tertiary education while 482(100%) did not participate; and finally, 0 (0%) participated in doctorate tertiary education while 482 (100%) did not participate. The result of the analysis shows that the percentage of agreement for 6 of the items are lower than 50. This result therefore shows that the role of education in the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State is low.

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between education and rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is education: while the dependent variable is rehabilitation of youth inmates. Simple regression analysis was applied to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

**Table 2:** Simple regression results of the relationship between education and the rehabilitation of youths in correctional centres in Cross River State (N=482)

	R= .046 <sup>a</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> =.002	Adj R <sup>2</sup> = .000	S.E= 4.342	
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F-ratio</b>	<b>p-level</b>
Regression	19.601	1	19.601		
Residual	9048.692	480	18.851	1.040	.308 <sup>b</sup>
Total	9068.293	481			

The result of the simple regression analysis education and the rehabilitation of youth inmates as presented in table 2 indicated an adjusted  $R^2$  of .000. This shows that education estimated for 0.0% of the variance in the rehabilitation of youth inmates in the study area. The F-value of the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was  $F= 1.040$  and the sig. value of .308<sup>b</sup> (or  $p>.05$ ) at degree of freedom (df) 1 and 480. This result implies that education does not significantly relate to the rehabilitation of youth inmates in the correctional centres in Cross River State.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The finding from the research question indicated that various educational programmes are available for youth inmates in the correctional centres of Cross River State. The responses show that the following educational programmes primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, vocational, technical, religious, recreational and undergraduate were available and others like master, and doctorate were unavailable.

The result of testing the hypothesis revealed that education does not significantly relate with the rehabilitation of youths in correctional centres in Cross River State. This finding is in direct agreement with the opinion of Adetula et al. (2010); they opined that criminals who were less hardened leave the correctional centres more hardened and commit more crimes that will send them back to the correctional centres. The finding disagrees with that of Olojede and Mohammed (2020), who in a related study on the effectiveness of correctional services in rehabilitation of convicts into new life through

recreational education asserted that educational rehabilitation gives the inmates the opportunity to continue with their educational pursuit from where they stopped before their imprisonment and that prison inmates who took part in educational rehabilitation programmes do not have the likelihood to commit a crime than those who did not participate. The findings are in variance with that of Ifeanyichukwu and Ugwuoke (2015), who assert that educational rehabilitation of prisoners is very important in the rehabilitation and reformation of inmates.

### **Conclusion**

Youths' involvement in crime is worrisome. This study looked at the role of education on the rehabilitation of youth inmates in correctional centres in Cross River State. The implication of this study is that education is an effective tool in character transformation and skill acquisition, therefore inmates should be exposed to education while in the correctional centres with emphasis on the education of the "Head" (Cognitive Domain), education of the "Heart" (Affective Domain) and education of the "Hand" (Psychomotor Domain), so that they are employable when they leave the prison and remain law abiding citizens.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government should ensure adequate funding of educational programmes in correctional centres, by ensuring that there is adequate provision of textbooks, notebooks and other educational materials for effective learning.
2. Qualified teachers should be employed to teach in the prison just like what is obtained in the mainstream educational system.
3. Counsellor and social workers should be employed to ensure effective guidance and counselling of youth inmates.
4. Religious leaders and Non-governmental Organizations should regularly preach sermons and organize seminars that focus on value orientation. This may help the inmates develop virtues such as peace, love, humility, empathy, diligence, and good morals, thereby becoming useful to themselves and society at large.

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