

Assessing Learning Experiences of Female Prison Inmates in Three South-Western States of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study provides information on the availability, types of learning activities, and perception of the female inmates towards these learning activities in prisons in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States. The study adopted the survey design. Total enumeration sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample size. The study discovered that the level of participation of inmates in learning activities was low and the learning experiences were of low-level skills such as tailoring, hairdressing, farming, and home economics. This study has provided great insights to policy makers, adult educators, and all those who are involved in the rehabilitation of inmates in the study areas. This finding will enable these service providers to improve the kind of rehabilitation activities offered to prison inmates after their release in the study areas and elsewhere in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS: *Female inmates, learning experiences, prison life*

Introduction

From the pre-colonial era, Nigeria had a way of curbing criminal tendencies and anti-social acts. The offenders who were tagged anti-social then were whipped, banished, or given death warrants to deter future criminal acts. Deities, shrines, ancestors, kinship, elders, age grade associations, the chiefs, and kings were some of the indigenous mechanisms of crime control in nearly all African societies. The Ogboni cult was also employed to exorcise such ideas from the people in many parts of Yoruba land. Likewise, the Ogboni cult (a fraternal institution) which rose among the Yorubas, and the Ewedas among the Edos served as prisons. The societies (Ogboni, Eweda, etc.) performed a range of political and religious functions, including exercising a profound influence on monarchs and serving as high courts of jurisprudence in capital offenses. Additionally, in the northern parts of the country the Fulanis had similar institutions while among the Tivs and Igbos, there were indications of functional equivalents of prisons (Aboki, 2007; Nnam, 2014; Nkwocha, Omoyibo, Yesufu, & Adegoke, 2010)

In the northern parts of the country, the Fulanis had similar institutions while among the Tivs and Igbos, there were indications of functional equivalents of prisons. Moreover, during the colonial rule, the government designed a prison system in 1872 to curb criminal acts through punishment and public service (deterrence) which has not yielded the goal of deterring criminal activities and achieving an optimum utilisation of the economy (Aboki, 2007; Orakwe, 2016; Nkwocha, Omoyibo, Yesufu, & Adegoke, 2010). However, the incarceration culture during the colonial military era was basically for punishing criminals (Enuku, 2001).

Orakwe (2016) stated that the origin of modern Prisons Service in Nigeria was in 1861, the year when conceptually, Western-type prison system was established in Nigeria. The declaration of Lagos as a colony in 1861 marked the beginning of the institution of formal machinery of governance. At this stage the preoccupation of the colonial government was to protect legitimate trade, guarantee the profits of British merchants as well as the activities of the missionaries (Ndokwe & Iroko, 2014). To this end, by 1861, the acting governor of the Lagos colony, who was then a prominent British merchant in Lagos, formed a Police Force of about 25 constables. This action was

followed in 1863 by the establishment in Lagos of four courts: a Police court to resolve petty disputes, a criminal court to try the more serious cases, a slave court to try cases arising from the efforts to abolish the trade in slaves, and a commercial court to resolve disputes among merchants and traders.

However, a proclamation issued in 1900 assumed the abolition of the legal status of slavery, which was no longer recognised in government courts, while an ordinance enacted the following year conferred free status on children born after 1901. Not until 1916 was slavery formally abolished throughout Nigeria. The progressive incursion of the British into the hinterland and the establishment of British protectorate towards the end of the 19th century necessitated the establishment of the prisons as the last link in the Criminal Justice System. Thus by 1910, there already were prisons in Degema, Calabar, Onitsha, Benin, Ibadan, Sapele, Jebba, and Lokoja. The declaration of protectorates over the East, West and North by 1906 effectively brought the entire Nigeria area under British rule. The colonial prison at this stage was not designed to reform anyone, but were very poorly run and in the main used for public works and other jobs for the colonial administration. The result was that the prisons served the purpose of punishing those who had the guts to oppose colonial administration in one form or the other while at the same time cowing those who might want to stir up trouble for the colonial set up. The Prison regulation was however published in 1917 to prescribe admission, custody, treatment, and classification procedures as well as staffing, dieting, and clothing regimes for the prisons. Unfortunately, these processes were not geared towards any particular type of treatment of inmates. It was not until 1934 that any meaningful attempt was made to introduce relative modernisation into the Prison Service (Mann, 2007; Ndukwe & Iroko, 2014; Orakwe, 2016).

However, not until 1971 was the government White Paper on the reorganisation of the prisons released. It was followed in 1972 by Decree No.9 of 1972, which spelt out the goals and orientation of the Nigerian Prisons Service. The prisons were charged with taking custody of those legally detained, identifying causes of their behaviour and retraining them to become useful citizens in the society. The welfare division was to be the pivot of the new prison order. It was to see to prisoners' treatment, training, and rehabilitation, including medical needs of the prisons, in addition to liaising between the prisons and voluntary and humanitarian organisations that assist in the treatment and rehabilitation of the prisoners (Orakwe, 2016).

Literature Review

Recently, the prison structure in the South-western Nigeria changed from being a deterrence prison system to a correctional facility through [the area's] welfare service (Orakwe, 2016). The welfare service includes the educational experience. Education is a means of emancipating people from abuse, unemployment and poverty – one reason why democratic countries provide basic education for all their citizens, even 'law breakers' (Quan-Baffour & Zawada, 2012). It can therefore be argued that imprisonment, even if it is viewed as justified punishment, should not bring with it additional deprivation of civil rights, which include education (UNESCO, 1995).

Ojo (2007) opined that the female prisoners could achieve mental freedom, which would reduce the propensity to commit crime through the experiences organised as learning activities in prison. Kolb (1984) noted that learning is human beings' primary mode of adaptation, if we don't learn we may not survive, and we certainly won't prosper. There are learning objectives organised into prisons learning experiences, which include educational learning experiences (basic and post-literacy education), vocational learning experiences, distance learning education, Information and Technology training experiences (ICT), religious education, and correctional/counselling learning experiences (Ayinde & Oloyede, 2011; Nwachukwu, 1998).

Ayu (as cited in Omoni & Ijeh, 2009) asserted that the prison must be a centre for information and not for punishment. The primary task of prison education is to increase the chances of employment by ex-convicts and hence reduce recidivism. Ostreicher (as cited in Omoni & Ijeh, 2009) opined that people believed that preparing prisoners for release is a key to ensuring public safety, which should be the basis of all correctional education.

However, Eneku (2001) stated that the imprisonment system in Nigeria was nothing exceptional. Education had brought great relief to wasteful spending on curbing criminal acts but had yielded little or no output (Omoni & Ijeh, 2009). Prison or correctional education was part of the prison reform movement. It was a window through which human progress could be monitored and encouraged. Simply put, it was the education given to prisoners to enable them to leave the prison with more skills and be in a position to find meaningful and long-term employment (Rhode as cited in Omoni & Ijeh, 2009).

Education in prison is expected to generate learning experiences which deter recurrence of criminal behaviour by transforming prisoners through correctional activities. This approach has subsequently started to change the correctional officers' responsibility from solely custodial to rehabilitative, a process in which officers are expected to manage rehabilitation treatment programmes. This paradigm shift raises a challenge in the execution of the dual role of prisoners' rehabilitation and incarceration (Gatotoh, Omulema, & Nassiuma, 2011). Thus, it could be said that education of prisoners will bring about a disorientation and re-orientation that will aid the developing countries in reducing crime rates in the states. One of the means by which Nigeria has been trying tirelessly to eradicate the escalation of criminal acts is by taking measures through correctional learning experiences (Orakwe, 2016).

There are many studies on the learning experiences of male prisoners in the Nigerian prisons and factors that militate against the success of the prisoners' learning experiences: inadequate finance, poor welfare services, overcrowding, health hazards, missing records of convicts, inadequate educators, and violation of human rights (Agomoh & Ogbozor, 2006; Eneku, 2001; Fasanmi, 2016; Ifeanyichukwu, 2009; Kadiri & Haliso, 2011; Ndukwe & Iroko, 2014; Ojo, 2007; Quan-Baffour & Zawada, 2012; Tanimu, 2010); Nwachukwu, 1998).

However, few known studies have been carried out on the female prisoners' learning experiences in Nigeria (Anene, 2013; Ojo, 2007). This lack of information raises concern, especially in the area of documenting learning experiences of female prisoners in prisons in selected south-western states, hence, this study.

The specific objectives of this study are to

1. identify the learning experiences of female prisoners in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States;
2. appraise the perceived quality of learning activities of female prisoners; and
3. determine the level of participation of the female prisoners in the learning activities in the study areas.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the learning experiences of female prisoners in the Ondo, Osun, and Oyo State prisons in Nigeria?
2. What is the perceived quality of learning activities of the female inmates?
3. What is the level of participation of the female inmates in these learning activities in the study areas?

These questions were raised with a view to providing information on the availability and types of learning activities for female inmates in the study areas.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design in assessing the learning experiences of the female inmates in prisons in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States: The population of all female inmates in Agodi Prison in Oyo State, Ilesha Prison in Osun State and Ondo Women Prison in Ondo State. These three prisons were medium prisons because they were the

only prisons that had female inmates in them when the research was conducted. Total enumeration sampling technique was used: all the female inmates in the study areas participated - a total of 40 female inmates in all three prisons. A structured questionnaire was used, namely the Structured Questionnaire on Programmes for Female Inmates (SQPFI); it included 45 items on a Likert scale and was categorised into 4 sections.

The Questionnaire was subjected to scrutiny by experts in the area of test and measurement and in education to judge its face validity, content validity, and the appropriateness of the items used in the instrument. Besides, a trial testing of the instrument was carried out on 15 female inmates in Olokuta prison in Akure. In order to ensure that the research instrument for this study was valid and reliable, the internal consistency of SQPFI was established using Cronbach Alpha Analysis (CAA) and it yielded a Coefficient Alpha Value (CAV) of 0.90. Such a result was considered adequate for the study. The data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentages, and central tendency (mean) to establish the female inmates' learning experiences in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States Prisons. Finally, the data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Respondents' Demographic Information

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Information

Prison	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Agodi	14	35
Ilesha	17	42.5
Ondo	9	22.5
Age Range		
18-27	6	15
28-37	17	37.5
38-47	12	30
48-57	5	12.5
57 and above	2	5
Religion		
Christianity	33	82.5
Islam	7	17.5
Traditional	0	0
Others	0	0
Total	40	100
Marital Status		
Single	4	10
Married	22	55
Separated	5	.5
Divorced	3	7.5
Widow	6	15
Total	40	100

Prison	Frequency	Percentage
	(f)	(%)
Conviction		
Yes	17	42.5
No	23	57.5
Total	40	100
Occupation Before Being Locked-Up		
Business	1	2.5
Banking	6	15
Chemist (drug vendor)	1	2.5
Computer	1	2.5
Farming	2	5
Nurse	1	2.5
Hair Stylist	4	10
Tailor	1	2.5
Trading	1	2.5
Typist	20	50
Total	40	100
Highest Educational Attainment before Lock-Up		
Tertiary	8	20
Secondary	18	45
Primary	11	27.5
None	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Research Question 1: What are the learning experiences of female prisoners in the Ondo, Osun and Oyo State prisons in Nigeria?

Table 2: Learning Experiences of Female Inmates

Learning Experiences of Female Inmates	Prisons											
	AGODI				ILESHA				ONDO			
	NA	FA	A	HA	NA	FA	A	HA	NA	FA	A	HA
Educational Experiences												
Adult Literacy	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Basic Education	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Secondary Education	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Tertiary Education	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Correctional/ Counselling												
Education												
Moral Instruction	2	5	5	2	1	14	1	1	0	0	2	6
Religious Education	1	1	1	11	0	0	0	17	0	0	4	4
Sexual Addiction Therapy	0	11	1	2	2	13	2	0	0	0	6	2
Drug Addiction Therapy	1	10	1	2	1	13	2	1	0	0	7	1
Physical and Health Education												
Games	4	6	3	1	0	0	0	17	0	1	5	2
Relay Race	12	1	1	0	17	0	0	0	0	1	6	1
ICT												
computer Programming	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Computer Repair	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Web Designing	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Word Processing	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Database Management	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Graphic Design	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Vocational Education												
Tailoring	1	9	2	2	0	0	0	17	0	9	3	5
Hair Dressing	0	10	3	1	0	0	0	17	0	0	5	3
Home Economics	0	9	3	2	0	0	2	15	0	0	5	3
Painting	12	1	1	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Interior Decoration and Design	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Pottery	14	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	9	0	0	0
Farming	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	3	6	0
Library Service	13	1	0	0	13	4	0	0	0	9	0	0

The learning experiences of the female inmates in Ondo, Osun and Oyo state prisons were categorised into educational learning experiences, correctional/counselling, physical and health education, ICT training, vocational learning activities, library service, and others which were ranked in terms of availability as Not Available (NA), Fairly Available (FA), Available (A), and Highly Available (HA).

The results showed the absence of educational learning experiences with adult literacy, basic/primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education in Ondo, Osun and Oyo states prisons. ICT was also absent in the study areas. The results also showed the availability of correctional/counselling learning experience in the study areas with moral instruction as the most predominant. The results further showed the availability of physical and health education (PHE) as learning experiences in the study areas.

The results showed the availability of vocational learning experience such as tailoring, hairdressing, home economics, interior decoration design, farming, and so on in some of the study areas. Overall, the most predominant learning experience in the studied areas (Ondo, Osun and Oyo States Prisons) was religious activity with (32, 80%, $\bar{x} = 3.74$). This was followed by tailoring (24, 60%, $\bar{x} = 3.33$), hairdressing (21, 52.5%, $\bar{x} = 3.28$), home economics (20, 50%, $\bar{x} = 3.28$), games (20, 50%, $\bar{x} = 3.13$), and then farming (22, 55%, $\bar{x} = 2.90$).

Research Question 2: What is the perceived quality of learning activities of the female inmates?

To answer this research question, the respondents’ responses to 15 items of Section C of SQPFI were scored in percentages as Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA) and was subjected to descriptive statistics.

Table 3: Perceived Quality of Learning Activities of Female Inmates (Criteria)

Perceived Quality of Learning Activities of Female Inmates in Ondo, Osun and Oyo States Prisons	SD %	D %	N %	A 5	SA %	Mean	Rank
1. The objectives of the training are clearly defined	21.1	63.2	15.8	0	0	1.95	12
2. Interaction and Participation are encouraged	7.9	0	18.4	63.2	10.5	3.68	3
3. The training objectives are met	5.1	5.9	33.3	2.6	0	2.33	11
4. Topics covered are relevant to me	7.9	28.9	21.1	31.6	10.5	3.08	8
5. The content is well organised and easy to follow	7.9	42.1	39.5	7.9	2.6	2.55	9
6. The materials distributed are helpful to me	5.3	2.6	15.8	65.8	10.5	3.73	1
7. The learning experience is useful to me	5.3	0	21.1	63.2	10.5	3.73	1
8. The time allotted for activities is sufficient	7.9	5.3	21.1	57.9	7.9	3.52	6
9. The trainers are knowledgeable about the training topics	8.1	0	27	54.1	10.8	3.59	4
10. The trainers are sufficient for the training	25	72.5	2.5	0	0	1.77	14
11. The inmates are part of the trainers (peer-teaching)	0	0	7.5	37.5	55	3.50	7
12. The material resource supplied for training are enough	75	20	5	0	0	1.95	12
13. The materials resources are of good quality	5.3	7.9	18.4	60.5	7.9	3.57	5
14. Access to real work environment is provided	23.7	34.2	26.3	13.2	2.6	2.36	10
15. There are adequate equipment/facilities in the wokshop	97.4	2.6	0	0	0	1.025	15

Quality criteria	Mean	Pass (Mean Score of 3 i.e. 60% and above)
1. The objectives of the training are clearly defined	1.95	–
2. Interaction and Participation are encouraged	3.68	ü
3. The training objectives are met	2.33	–
4. Topics covered are relevant to me	3.08	ü
5. The content is well organised and easy to follow	2.55	–
6. The materials distributed are helpful to me	3.73	ü
7. The learning experience is useful to me	3.73	ü
8. The time allotted for activities is sufficient	3.52	ü
9. The trainers are knowledgeable about the training topics	3.59	ü
10. The trainers are sufficient for the training	1.77	–
11. The inmates are part of the trainers (peer-teaching)	3.50	ü
12. The material resource supplied for training are enough	1.95	–
13. The materials resources are of good quality	3.57	ü
14. Access to real work environment is provided	2.36	–
15. There are adequate equipment/facilities in the workshop	1.025	–

Also, on the perceived quality of Learning Activities of Female Inmates, the results in table 4 showed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) quality criteria passed as measure of quality of learning activities of female inmates in Ondo, Osun and Oyo State prisons. This result gives an equivalent of 53% quality.

Research Question 3: What is the level of participation of the female inmates in these learning activities in the study areas?

Level of Participation	Yes (f)	Yes(%)	No(f)	No(%)
1. Choice of learning experience	40	100	0	0
2. Conveyed out-of-prison learning activities	0	0	40	100
3. Request for skills not available	0	0	40	100
4. Participation in decision making as regard planning new programmes	0	0	40	100
5. Participation in decision making regarding time for programmes	0	0	40	100
6. Participation in decision making regarding objectives design	0	0	40	100
7. Exhibition of vocational trades allowed	19	47.5	21	52.5
8. Attempted written Exam	03	7.5	37	92.5
9. Coerced to learn	0	0	40	100
10. Learn voluntarily	40	100	0	0

The results of the evaluation of the level of participation of inmates in learning activities showed a low level of participation. Inmates did not partake in decision making regarding requests for new skills unavailable within prison walls and planning of programmes.

Discussion of Findings

The main purpose of the study was to assess the learning activities of Female inmates in Prisons in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo States. The research sought to ascertain the level of participation in the learning activities in prison, the perception of the female inmates, and identify which learning activities were made available for female inmates in Prisons.

The results showed that the majority of the female inmates are married and had served less than a year in prison. They had family responsibilities or roles that the society demanded. This discovery supported the findings of Lisa and Tracy (2009) that women who were of the labour force were the majority of the convicts because they were all engaged in business enterprises. There was also a general consensus that women who were more involved in business life rather the cultural family role were more prone to criminal acts.

The findings highlighted that there were learning activities in prison such as Religious Activities, Moral Instruction, Sexual Addiction Therapy, Drug Addition Therapy, Games, Relay Races, Tailoring, Hairdressing, Home Economics, Farming, and Library Services (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013; Ugwuoke & Ojonugwa, 2014; Uche, Uche, Ezumah, Ebue, Okafor, & Ezegbe, (2015). Religious activities took predominance in prison learning experience (Ayinde and Oloyede, 2011; Asokhia and Agbonluae, 2013), but there were some exemptions to learning activities such as the absence of remedial educational programmes, such as Adult Literacy Programmes, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and ICT Training Programme which agree with the findings of Obioha (2011) and Ugwuoke & Ojonugwa (2014). These dissimilarities could have resulted from lack of infrastructures and facilitators for these training programmes (Tanimu, 2010; Ayinde & Oloyede, 2011).

The mean scores obtained of the female inmates' perceptions of the learning activities were relatively high. They generated behavioural modification with the learning activities, giving allowance for the interaction and participation of inmates while engaging them in a penal system. The inmates believed that the learning experiences were helpful to them and that their facilitators were knowledgeable (Ayinde & Oloyede, 2011; Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013; Ugwuoke & Ojonugwa, 2014). Moreover, inmates' facilitation of activities had a relatively high mean score, which could be due to inadequate personnel. This finding corroborated Tanimu (2010) and Asokhia and Agbonluae (2013) that the educational experiences were insubstantial, owing to the lack of trainers to facilitate the learning experiences. This finding further revealed that the method commonly used in these prisons for female learning activities is peer-teaching, which supported the findings of Tanimu (2010), who discovered that inmates were facilitating learning experiences in prison. The peer-teaching method is one of the best methodologies for actualising learning experiences.

The results of research question three revealed that most of the decisions taken to generate behaviour modification were the sole responsibility of prison officials and educational facilitators. The inmates were merely recipients of the learning experiences. The findings were similar in all the prisons and implied that the learning experiences were limited to what was obtainable in the prison and that the rights of the inmates in planning and designing of their learning experiences were curtailed. This finding agrees with Nkwocha, *et al.* (2010) who noted that the treatment staff constructed a therapeutic rationale for their decision-making: custody had influenced or dominated decisions because the inmates could raise the spectre of escape or violence. This perspective also coincided with the findings of Agomoh and Ogbosor (2006), who submitted that the female inmates were discriminated against and maltreated in every aspect of prison life.

Finally, the results of the authors' hypotheses indicated that there was a significant relationship between the years inmates had spent in prison and their learning experiences. The learning experiences of female inmates, which included their library usage and their moral instruction, had a significant impact on their prison status. This finding agrees with Ifeanyichukwu (2009), who submitted that the well-being of the inmates is dependent on their prison status, not on how long they are being locked-up.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the learning experiences in Ondo, Osun, and Oyo State Prisons comprised mainly of religious activities and local skills such as tailoring, hair dressing, and home economics. Unfortunately, female inmates were not allowed to partake in decision-making concerning skills to be acquired as these individuals were only allowed to access the available skills in prisons at that period in time. Thus, these skills were meant to generate self-sustenance for the female inmates after the completion of their jail terms, and thus their years of imprisonment was not affected.

Recommendations

1. This study is useful to the educational policy makers at the national level to encourage further investigation into current prison education and its role in preparing ex-convicts for jobs and vocational employment once they leave the prison. This may help curb further crime in the society.
2. The prison education policy needs adjustment to allow for adequate participation of the female inmates in their learning activities, which should include ICT training and other learning experiences such as basic/primary, secondary, tertiary education, and so on.
3. Government should provide better rehabilitative and reformatory services, including adequate and efficient education programmes for the inmates with the view of helping them to adapt to life out of prison on their release, thereby reducing recidivism. Therefore, more trainers should be deployed to the prisons and the workshops equipped with material resources which would generate the re-orientation and rehabilitation of the female inmates, so as to prepare the ex-convicts for discharge.

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