



Conditions And Congestion Of Nigeria Correctional Service Centres In Rivers State, Causes And Solutions

Iyeshim, Monday

**Department of Sociology
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

This research x-rayed the abinitio of correctional centres, its present conditions, level of congestion, causes and solutions in Rivers State particularly and Nigeria in general. It found out that some of the correctional centres were built by the colonial masters and had remained the same overtime. Consequently, it could no longer meet the demands of today. Their populations had tripled the carrying capacities. Some questions were raised with the specific objective of investigating the present conditions and congestion, welfare of inmates, the causes of congestion and solutions using the tenets of structural functionalism theory. Descriptive design methodology was adopted alongside Quota sampling technique. Data for the research were collected through both primary and secondary sources Above all, the study recommended transfer, of inmates, and construction of more custodial centres, alternative sentencing and speedy trials of inmates.

Keywords: Custodial, centres, inmates, conditions and congestion.

INTRODUCTION

The word prison trace its origin to the old French word “prisoun”, which means captivity or imprisonment (Kekere, 2020). The Nigerian Prison Service now known as Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) is an arm of the Criminal Justice System of Nigeria domiciled in the ministry of interior. As an agency of the government, the Correctional Service Act 2019 repealed the Prison Act Cap. P 29, laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 (Law Nigeria Admin, 2019). While Losipov (2022) defined correctional centres as an institution meant for the confinement of persons who have been remanded (held) in custody by a judicial authority or who have been deprived of their liberty following conviction for a crime, Dugger et al (2022) saw it as a building in which people are legally held as a punishment for crime they committed or while awaiting trial. Correctional Centres are facilities where captured criminals or suspects are kept pending the determination of their cases. As an institution, they are dedicated to protect the society from crime and the rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

Nigerian Correctional Service Centres are made up of the staff (officers), inmates on death roll, Lifers, convicts and with majority awaiting trial. While the task of Criminal Justice System is carried out through the means of detecting, apprehending, prosecuting, adjudicating and sanctioning those members of the society who violate its established laws (Ugwuoke, 2010), Nigerian Correctional Service Centres as member of the Criminal Justice System of Nigeria, enforces the custodial requirement of the law. To realize the goal of deterrence, incarceration retribution, reformation, rehabilitation, reintegration and decongestion respectively, the various components of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) must ensure proper coordination. Worryingly, Amnesty International (2008) observed a trending lacuna that necessitated over congestion in custodial service centres nationwide. Specifically, Oti (2016) spotted this conditions and congestion trend and stated that 80% of inmates in Nigerian custodial centres population are awaiting trials and most of them are held for trivial offences that areailable. The bad conditions and congestion of Nigeria Correctional Service centres in Rivers State without doubt created worry to the Chief Justice of Rivers State, Justice Simeon Chibuzor-Amadi and other stakeholders (Daily Post Nigeria, 22 Nov. 2022). This concern is further compounded with the 72,000 continual rise in inmates’ population nationwide (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution- IPCR, 2017).

The actual capacity design of the four Custodial Service Centres in Rivers State are Maximum Security Custodial Centre Port Harcourt previously 804 inmates now increased to 1800, Minimum Security Custodial Centre, Degema 200, Minimum Security Custodial Centre, Ahoada 200, Elele prison farm 200, but

unfortunately in the exception of Elele, all hold more inmates than required (2016). This failure is traceable to Criminal Justice System charged with the responsibilities of propelling prosecution of criminal cases in the state (Uwais, 2004). The condition and congestion challenges of correctional service centres has further resulted to many health related problems, inadequate cells, aggression among inmates, shortages of food and lack of control (Jarma, 1999; Otite & Albert, 2004). Successive governments in Nigeria have set up panel of inquiries, committees and initiated reform programmes all to no avail. Recently, the Federal Minister of Interior Raulf Aregbesola announced federal government determination to suspend the feeding of state inmates in January 2024 (Punch, 2023). Scholars such as Okiwe et al (2020) discussed the conditions and congestion level amongst correctional services but in the whole of Niger Delta. Ukwayi & Ukpa (2017) worked on the critical assessment of Nigeria Criminal Justice System and the perennial problem of awaiting trials in Port Harcourt Maximum Security Custodial Centres he dwelled majorly on awaiting trial syndrome. Akanji (2018) similarly discussed incarceration of non-violent offenders at the High Court in Oyo State. Edetalehn (2021) reviewed plea bargain as a panacea for the decongestion of correctional centres in Nigeria Agbesi (2016) annotation was on the causes and effects of overcrowding at HO Central Prison Ghana, and Emerho (2016) mentioned the factors affecting the correctional functions of Custodial Centres in Nigeria, specifically those of Awata and Onitsha prisons respectively But unfortunately, none of the scholars considered the transfer of prisoners as a recipe, the introduction of school system for the inmates, in Custodial Centres, hence, the gap in knowledge which this research wish to fill.

Research Questions

- i. What are the actual carrying capacities of the Custodial Centres in Rivers State, the current lockup numbers and the status of inmates?
- ii. Are there adequate spacious structures and school system to guarantee the good of prisoners?
- iii. What factors necessitated Congestion in Correction Service Centres and their alternatives?
- iv. What are the effects of conditions of correctional service centres and the level of congestion?

Objectives

- i. To find out the total number of inmates and the carrying capacity of each correctional Service Centres
- ii. To discover the nature of facilities suggest solutions and school system in the correctional service centres.
- iii. To investigate the factors that led to the congestion of Correctional Service Centres and find better alternative.
- iv. To disclose the effects of conditions and congestion on both inmates and officers.

Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the structural functionalism theory. The theory viewed society as a single interconnected social system with each component like Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) performing definite functions (Ottong, 2004). The basic characteristics is the integration of its components and functional integration system occasioned by interdependence of its parts. This theory recognizes social equilibrium. Structural functionalism basic assumption is that the various elements of human society such as NCoS function interdependently and harmoniously in unity for the benefit of the whole system. In the eyes of this theory, this research sees Criminal Justice system (CJS) which NCoS is among, as an institution and component part of the social system. Nigeria Correctional Service is an agency charged to maintain and enforce the law and regulate custodial service centres in Nigeria. However, where a component part of the society fails to function efficiently, social disequilibrium set in. Hence, within this context, the condition and congestion syndrome caused by rigidity in the penal code, holding charges, delay in delivery of justice, lack of cells and transfer of inmates among others are responsible for the congestion that had occurred in custodial centres in Rivers State and Nigeria in general. Therefore, the Criminal Justice System of Nigeria (Law Court and Police) particularly as component parts of the Nigerian society has hands in the condition and congestion of correctional institutions in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Evolution of correctional institutions.

This research discovered that prison otherwise known as correctional institutions evolved through ancient civilizations and traditional societies. In some quarters, it began as claustrophobic underground dungeon

detentions and led up to modernize correctional institutions with significant custodial conditions. The earliest records of prison according to Dugger et al (2022) dated back to 1000 BC and were in Mesopotamia and Egypt. In ancient Greece, prisons tended to be poorly isolated buildings where prisoners were chained up at their feet using a simple wooden block and locked inside. While the Greek confinements were humane, Roman prisons were highly inhumane with either slavery or death as the primary mode of punishment (Coyle, 2000). Prisons were used throughout Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. Early European prisons were used to hold people before their trials or while they await their punishment. According to Walmsley (2001), by the end of 17th century, prisons in and around London like the Bridewell prison had begun to operate as houses of correctional centres. But for Emerho (2016), modern concept of prisons began in 1215 when King John of England agreed to a royal Charter of right known as the Magna Carta Libertatum which stated that every individual had a right to a trial before imprisonment. Suffice that prison conditions as observed in this research from its chronology continued to be harsh and a detention centre rather than correctional institutions. The aftermath of 16th and 17th centuries industrial revolution led to urbanization and increase in crime, prison congestion and early unhygienic prison conditions.

The early prison system in England also made use of Panel transportation. The Transportation Act of 1718 facilitated the transfer of criminals to oversea colonies as a form of banishment and deterrence. By 1823, the Goal Act allowed female prisoners to be separated from male prisoners while in America, prison started in Pennsylvania in 1789.

Stating the setting up of correctional institutions in Nigeria, Emerho (2016), mentioned that imprisonment preceded the arrival of British Colonialist and that the actual origination of correctional institutions dates back to remote history. Ajayi (2014) citing Alemika and Alemika (1995) traced the introduction of British form of prison to Broad Street Prison with an initial inmate capacity of 300 in Lagos Nigeria in 1861. Similarly (Ajayi, Ibid) specified that Calabar correctional institution was built in 1890, Sapele 1898 and Port Harcourt 1918 during the British colonial era to suppress native authorities and indigenous Nigerians who kicked against British interest. Igbo (2007) and Orakwe (2022) saw this as a move to suppress opposition. Thus, before 1920, correctional institutions were already scattered round Nigeria. This development later metamorphosed into 242 correctional institutions in the present Nigeria (Obialo, 2023), a prototype of Broad Street Prison Lagos (Ajayi, 2014) and a carryover of colonial mentality (Temibiage, 2010). By the British Colonial Prison Regulation 1917, Col Mabb introduced training, director of prison supervisory and inspectoral power over the native authority prisons in 1934. By 1946, Mr. Dolan introduced visitation of relative, transfer of prison headquarter from Enugu to Lagos, adult education and the appointment of wardresses. He converted part of Port Harcourt prisons for the treatment of juveniles. Therefore, Dolan's tenure represented a high point in the evolution of Nigerian Correctional Service. The abolition of Native Authority in 1968 and the subsequent unification of the prisons service in Nigeria marked the beginning of Nigeria correctional service as a composite reality. Ugwuoke and Ameh (2014) added that due to the civil war, it was not until 1971 that the government white paper on the reorganization of correctional institution was released by the 1972 Decree No. 9. With its effort to comply with international best practices, the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 was signed into law by President Muhammedu Buhari (Chigbogu, 2022).

Conditions and Congestion of Correctional Centres in Rivers State

The controller of Nigeria Correctional Service Maximum security Custodial Centre Port Harcourt, Olumide Tuloye in 2020 described it as the most populated in Nigeria (John, 2020). Custodial centres in Rivers State comprises Maximum Security Custodial Centres Port Harcourt, Medium Security Custodial Centre Degema, Medium Security custodial centre Ahoada and custodial farm centre Elele (Naku, 2002). The Design of Maximum Security Custodial Centre Port Harcourt from inception in 1918 was built to accommodate only 804 inmates and later increased to 1800 but now carries 3,092, Ahoada Centre was built for 200 inmates but now carries 3,65 inmates Degema 200 now hold 272 respectively. These Correction centres like other centres nationwide are overcrowded, badly congested and poorly ventilated. Furthermore, Coyle (2000) stated that the inmates are left at the mercy of diseases and epidemics which caused them poor health and death. Inmates are not on good diet, they are poorly fed and clothed. (Igbo, 2008) summed it that Maximum Security Custodial Centres like that of Port Harcourt are higher level correctional centres which accommodates all classes of inmates especially the death row inmates. Gallow is located very close to the condemned convicts cells. Given that the major problem responsible for this is the congestion ratio. The congestion rate is so high and to a large extent hampered effective administration (Losipov, 2022). Furthermore, Chief Judge of Rivers State, Justice

Simeon Chibuzor-Amadi on November 22, 2022 expressed displeasure over condition and congestion of Rivers State correctional centres having the highest number of inmates in West Africa sub-region (Chinedu, 2022). For Prof Yemi Osinbajo Vice-President of Nigeria (2019 – 2023), Port Harcourt correctional centre is the most populated prison in the country with 5,000 inmates and 3,700 inmates dumped in awaiting trial. Stating at the public presentation of three volumes of Prison Survey Report (PSR) put together by the Nigerian Correctional Service and the prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) held at the Sheraton Hotels and Towers in Abuja Osinbajo maintained that Port Harcourt Custodial Centre turned inmates to animals. The vice president stated that “any human being who goes into PHCC comes out as an animal”. Decrying the poor infrastructure and living conditions of inmates Yemi Osinbajo describe it as a warehouse (Nasiru, 2018).

To buttress this, Ajayi (2012) mentioned similarly that Ibara prison, Abeokuta Ogun State congestion rate is 400% Oko prison Edo State 300%. Hence, the account of conditions and congestion of correctional institutions in Nigeria irrespective of their geographical location painted a grim picture of grime and immense problems. At first is the offensive odour oozing from the inmates that makes the researcher very uncomfortable. Meals time which ordinarily according to Emerho (2016) ought to be a happy time have been turned into a nightmare for inmates. What constitute meals is garri with half done beans, mixed paste of processed cassava and what could pass for anything but soup. The sight of the food is enough to void ones appetite (Naku, 2022). Given that the quantity of food served is so nauseating that to talk about the quality would be to do extreme damage to language. Some inmates testified that they either buy foodstuff with their own money and cook in their cells or wait for their relatives (Chinedu, 2022). Accommodation in the custodial centres are horrible, six inmates are made to occupy a small cell without convenience nursing one ailment or the other.

The totality of custodial institutions in Rivers State suffers shortages of bed space. Only half of the inmates sleep on beds with little ventilation. This unbecoming conditions is what Adelaja (2009) described as harsh and life threatening. Earlier, Burrow et al (1991) exploring the conditions and factors responsible for custodial centres congestion in Nigeria explained that three of every five inmates had not been convicted of any offense, instead they wait years for their trials in appalling conditions. Similarly, Olusola Ogundipe (Formal Control-General of Nigeria Correctional Service 2012) revealed that pre-trial detainees constitute about 80% prison population with many having no case file. The report by Human Rights Practice Commission for Prisoner’s Dignity 1999, estimated that at least one inmates dies per day at the Kirikiri Correctional Centre Lagos and buried without the notice of the relatives. Therefore, being sentenced to a term of imprisonment in Nigeria is akin to either a hellfire or imposing a death sentence. Given that there is shortage of manpower (28,065 Officers nationwide), food and accommodation, officers reportedly turned correction centres into business ventures (Nigeria National Human Right Commission – NNHRC, 2015). In Port Harcourt maximum correction centre, visiting days are usually market days of extortion, gate fees and levy. Relatives are charged heavily in four pay points before permitted to see their love ones. Above all, the aforementioned facts and underlisted figures summarized Amnesty International (2014) view of Nigeria correctional centres as hell fire and violation of Nigeria obligation under International Human Rights Law and Standards including the UN standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Nigeria geopolitical zones and Custodial inmate’s population

To clearly buttress the facts and figures of the conditions and congestion of correctional facilities in Nigeria as shown in the under drawn diagram below, the states that are most industrialized with the highest population and rate of criminality were chosen to represent each of the six geo- political zonation to provide true evidence of Nigerian correctional institutions. Kekere (2020), citing National Bureau of Statistics NBS (2021) stated that the targeted number of inmates into which the Centres were built had now exceeded the infrastructural carrying capacity as contemplated. In Enugu State Kekere (Ibid) continued that the number of inmates was exceeded by over 91 to 806 above the maximum correctional carrying capacity between 2007 and 2015 the centres were meant to accommodate. Similarly in Gombe State, inmate population above maximum prison capacity increased to 1,049 in 2015. Kaduna State correctional centres statistics showed only 18% increase over the maximum capacity. Lagos State correctional centres also had extra inmates of 524 to 2,528 equivalent to 21% and 90% increase. The Rivers State correctional centres congestion of inmates is worrisome, from 1,182 to 3,192, an 87% increase of 2,296. The precarious conditions and congestion of correctional service

centres is on the increase and get worst continually. For example, in Rivers State, an extra number of inmates rose from 3,944 in 2013 to 4,934 increase in 2015.

Table 1: Capacities of the Custodial Centres in Rivers State

State	Name of correctional centre	Carrying capacity	Current no of inmates	Percentage
Rivers	Port Harcourt maximum security correctional centre	1,800	3,092	82
	Degema medium security correctional centre	200	272	7.2
	Ahoda medium security correctional centre	200	365	9.6
	Elele correctional farm centre	200	37	0.9
Total	4	2,400	3,766	100

Source & Date: Field work 30/5/2023

Table 2: Custodial centre inmates Status

Population characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Awaiting trial inmates Ahoda/ Port Harcourt	2,656	70%
Inmates on death row	467	12.4
Convicts	582	15.4
Lifers	61	1.6
Total 4	3,766	100

Source & Date: 26 May 2023/ Field Work

Table 3: Correctional Service Centres Inmates Population in Selected States of Nigeria 2005 – 2015

State	Status	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Enugu	No of prison	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	-	4	4	4
	Inmates	1,197	1,270	1,279	1,560	1,485	1,773	2,027	-	1,927	2,119	2,200
	Capacity	1,394	1,394	1,145	1,145	1,394	1,394	1,394	-	1,394	1,394	1,394
Gombe	No of prison	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	-	5	5	5
	Inmates	719	592	558	654	705	843	890	-	1,687	1,332	1,549
	Capacity	638	638	637	637	638	638	638	-	638	638	638
Kaduna	No of prison	15	15	17	16	16	15	15	-	15	15	15
	Inmates	2,363	2,307	2,243	2,221	2,294	2,238	1,883	-	2,396	2,368	2,720
	Capacity	2,802	2,802	2,560	2,560	2,702	2,702	2,702	-	2,702	2,702	2,702
Lagos	Inmates	4077	3755	3902	3874	4372	4740	5324	-	3380	3480	4905
	No. of prison	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	-	5	5	5
	Capacity	2796	2796	2795	2795	2796	2796	2796	-	2798	3897	3897
Rivers	No. of prison	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	-	4	4	4
	Inmates	2536	2731	3195	3380	2930	32447	3362	-	5298	5286	6288
	Capacity	1354	1354	1354	1354	1354	1354	1354	-	1354	1354	1354
FCT Abuja	No. of prison	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	2	2	2
	Inmates	739	924	762	866	924	1027	959	-	1073	1296	1305
	Capacity	570	570	330	330	570	720	720	-	720	720	720
Nigeria	No. of prison	227	227	228	228	230	238	238	-			
	Inmates	39006	40953	39691	41143	41786	75261	49451	-	55173	56058	64974
	Capacity	46,706	46,294	586	43,698	46,296	49,496	49,496	-	47,646	49,825	50,153

Source: Nigeria Correctional Service, 2016

Global Pattern of Correctional Centre Population

In 2017, Nigeria had 72,000 prisoners (IPCR, 2017). The number rised to 74,059 in 2023 (ICIR, 2023). Hence, with population strength of 219.3 million people, there is a prisoner among every 2,961 persons. Similarly, China has 1.4 billion populations with 1,690,000 inmates. Comparatively, Nigeria ranks 27th among countries with highest number of prisoners (International Centre for Investigative Reporting – ICIR, 2023). World Prison Brief (WPB), an institution collecting data on prisons worldwide also opined that the population of prisoners each country keeps does not commensurate with the inmates welfare, right and prison infrastructures. Nigeria has the highest number of inmates in West Africa and ranked 7th in Africa. Initially, in 1982, there were only 41,034 inmates in Nigeria, 54,079 in 1990, 52,000 in 1996. Nigeria inmates number shrank to 44,450 in 2000., 40,048 in 2002 and 38,999 in 2004. It increased from 46,586 in 2010 to 74,059 in 2023. Comparable to other nations where female constitute greater percentage like China 8.6% in 2018, USA 10.2%, India 4.1% 2021, Russia 8.9 2022, Turkey 3.9% 2022, Thailand 11.5% 2021, Indonesia 4.9% 2022 and Mexico 5.6%, Nigeria is only 2%. Therefore, Nigerian women are less violent. Summatively, this sociological analysis above all showed crime necessitating factors that brought about congestion in correctional service centres as terrorism cultism, banditry, kidnapping, and money ritual and yahoo as responsible for the sudden increase in inmates population.

Causes of Correctional Centres Congestion

1. **Faulty Criminal Justice System:** Wherever more than 60% of prison population is awaiting trial, then the Criminal Justice System is faulty. A faulty criminal justice system would always bring about delay in the administration of justice. Agbesi (2016) postulated that what brought about these faults are inadequate Law Courts and judicial personnel, lack of preparation, lack of dedication, incompetency and unnecessarily adjournment of cases. Others are shortages of computers and secretarial staff, frequent transfer of magistrates and judges, legal fees and stringent criteria often imposed for bail.
2. **Over use of prison sentencing by judges:** The use of imprisonment for every offense in Nigeria is wrong. There is an acute over use of imprisonment and detention in the Nigerian Criminal Justice System instead of alternative sentencing. This according to Ndifon (2012) is caused by the rigidity of the Nigeria penal code. Abuchi (2013) added that the justice system in Nigeria is not flexible, tolerant and liberal. Persons indicated for trivial offences like traffic violation, fighting and other minor crimes are supposed to pay fine, participate in community service or made to pay back what have wrongfully collected from others. This holding of charges and awaiting trial problem as described by Ukwayi et al (2017) is merely to keep the accused in detention while the prosecutor build bigger cases and prepare a more serious offence.
3. **Increase in criminality:** It is not surprising that prison congestion in Rivers State is caused by increase in criminality especially Yahoo business and cultism. Chronologically, research indices from the charts showed that Rivers State in the recent saw more increase in crime among the youth due to the level of poverty and unemployment (UNMBEO, 2023).
4. **Inadequate correctional facilities:** The insufficiency and shortage of custodial centres round Nigeria and Rivers State in particular is the major reason behind the congestion in correctional institutions. Its very unbecoming that Port Harcourt maximum security British Colonial prison of 1918 is still in use today. Suffice it that the institutions are old fashioned and the few cells dilapidated from abinitio, these custodial centres were built for a certain carrying capacity but now carries more. The mergins (as already described in the previous tables) are enough to turn it to hell fire Amnesty International (Ibid) and animal farm Osibanjo (Ibid).

Consequences of the conditions and congestion of correctional centres

1. **Spread of infectious diseases:** The overcrowding of Custodial Centres had led to the spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, chicken pox and HIV/AIDS. South African Prisoner's Organization for Human Rights (SAPOHR) writing in Agbesi (2016) once contended suing the government to Court for violating the prisoners right unless it urgently address prison overcrowding conditions.
2. **Lack of control:** Agbesi (2016) citing Nesor (1993) continued that overcrowding in Custodial centres makes prison administration and control difficult. It had led to higher cell temperatures and noise

level, poorer ventilation in cells, idleness and disagreement among prisoners. This creates high potential for conflict and can negatively influence the relationship between staff and prisoners.

3. **Mental problems:** Chinedu (2022) citing Prof. Yemo Osinbajo Vice President of Nigeria stated that Port Harcourt correctional centre had turn inmates to animals. Reid (1997) writing in Agbesi (2016) contended that the stress in overcrowded prisons can induce mental problem and disequilibrium in mental capability of inmates and staff. This imbalance once accumulated, structures and determines the psychology of the victim.
4. **Poor Custodial Centres condition:** In the other hand, prison congestion itself leads to poor prison conditions. Once a custodial centre is filled, there is band to be congestion. In a congested prison, there is no privacy, inmates urinate and dedicate in the presence of others. The negative socialization in the Custodial Centres makes reformation impossible.
5. **Expenses:** Early this year, the minister of interior informed the States of the Federation of federal government decision to shift state prisoners expenses to the states to bear in 2024 as federal government would not be feeding state prisoners. Therefore, the states of the federation will have to increase budget for prison services and shift more resources and expenses to the prison.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive design was adopted to describe the condition and congestion of correctional centres in Rivers State. Hence, the correctional centres in Rivers State are four (Port Harcourt, Degema, Ahoada and Elele) with different variation, the researcher used quota sampling in selecting fifty respondents, thirty from Port Harcourt, eight Degema, ten Ahoada and two from Elele correctional centre. The data are collected from both primary and secondary sources and analyzed with the use of tables and simple percentages.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 5: Capacity of correctional centres

State	Name of centres	Capacity	No. of inmates	Percentage
Rivers	Port Harcourt	1,800	3,092	82%
	Degema	200	272	7.2%
	Ahoada	200	365	9.6%
	Elele	200	37	0.9%
Total	4	2,400	3,766	100%

Source & Date: Fieldwork 30/5/2023

Table 6: Correctional centres inmates status

Population characteristic males and female	Frequency	Percentage
Awaiting trial inmates	2,696	71.5%
Inmates on death roll	467	12.4%
Convicts	582	15.4%
Lifers	61	1.6%
Total	3,766	100%

Source & Date: Fieldwork 30/5/2023

Data Analysis: the data presented from table two to four showed first that there are four custodial centres in Rivers State with a total of 3,766 inmates Port Harcourt and Maximum Security Custodial Centres, has the highest number of inmates. While the correctional population determines the variance in capacity, awaiting trial inmates constitute more than half of the total population.

Table 7: Respondents perception of effects of condition and congestion of correctional centres on inmates and officers

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	64.0
No	18	36.0
Total	50	100.0

Source & Date: Fieldwork 30/5/2023

In table 7 above, 36% of the respondents said congestion in correctional centres does not have any effect on inmates and officers while 64% said it had effects on inmates and officers. This indicates that congestion in correctional centres had effects on both inmates and officers.

Table 8: Respondents perception of spacious structures and quality programmes

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	82.0
No	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

Source & Date: Fieldwork 30/5/2023

From table 8, 18% of the respondents said that there is enough structure and programmes while 82% said that there is lack of structure and quality programmes. This annotation indicate that there is acute lack of adequate structure and quality programmes in the centres.

Table 9: Possible causes of congestion in correctional centres

Possible causes	Frequency	Percentage
Delayed justice and adjournment of court cases	14	28.0
Frequent crime committals, abuse of arrest and bail conditions	12	24.0
Inadequate cells	7	14.0
Awaiting trial and inability to pay legal fees	17	34.0

Source & Date: Fieldwork 30/5/2023

From the data presented in table 9, 14% of the respondents said inadequate cells is the possible cause of congestion in correctional centres while 12% disagreed saying that frequent crime committal was the possible cause. 28% respondents were of different view that instead adjournment of cases was the cause a point 34% disagreed rather that it is inability to pay legal fees that caused congestion in correctional centres.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The focus of this research was to examine the condition and congestion of correctional centres in Rivers State. A sample size of 50 was used to administer structured questionnaire for the study. The targeted respondents are the staff and inmates. With regard to the findings about the condition and congestion of correctional centres in Rivers State, the research noted some frequent ugly lacuna in the criminal justice system of Nigeria and the adjournment of cases at law court. If the police and lawyers can do their work well, the warder's would have less troubles.

Congestion of correctional centres in Rivers State and Nigferia in general is a major problem. While the conditions of correctional centres as built by the colouiuul masters have not improved in the modern Nigeria, the States and Federal government are shifting blames and responsibility on each other. Sufficing that in democracy, it is unhealthy to subject one another to series of human right abuse and inhuman treatments as seen in the correctional centres therefore, imprisonment should be seen as something beyond sending people to prisons.

RECOMMENDATION

- i. Hence, the total number of imprisonment is much (3,766) Rivers State and (74,059) nationwide, imprisonment should be reserved for only violent criminals who had been so sentenced and not people that are awaiting trials. This will enable custodial cntres maintain their carrying capacities.

- ii. Transfer, renovation and construction of more correctional centres. Because many of the existing custodial centres are old, the government should therefore renovate and construct new ones. There should also be study centres where inmates can write FSLC exams and do courses in National Open University of Nigeria.
- iii. Decongestion: the trends of bad condition and congestion of prison had made necessarily community service of now-violent inmates as an alternative to incarceration. That is, instead of prison sentence, the offender should be ordered by law court to perform unpaid job in the society in order to rebuild the damages. This will reduce the deplorable condition and decongest the centres.
- iv. The escalation awaiting trial inmates, inmates on death roll, convicts and lifers syndrome are much and should be promptly checkmated to reduce congestion. This will enable the inmates live a better healthy life and the staff discharge their duties without stress and pressur.

REFERENCES

- Abuchi, U.K (2013). Prison Congestion in Nigeria: causes and solutions. Jos press Ltd.
- Aduba, J.N. (2020). overcrowding in Nigeria prison: A critical appraisal. Office of Justice programs.
- Kekere, A.I (2020). Decongesting Nigeria correctional facilities: An outline critique of the efforts under the administration of criminal justice Act 2015. *Journal of law and Judicial system* 3, (2).45-56.
- Agbakoba, O.& Ibe, S. (2004). *Travesty of Justice: An advocacy manual against holding charge*. The Human Rights Law Service.
- Agbesi, E.K, (2016). Causes and effects of overcrowding at prisons: A study of the HO central prison, Ghana. *Public policy and Administration Research* 6 (5), 40-53.
- Ajayi, J.O (2012). Nigeria prisons and the dispensation of justices. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 1, (3) 208-233
- Akeredolu, O. (2009). Decongesting Nigerian prisons: Editorial and Opinion. *The guarding* Monday 4, 2009.
- Alemika, E.E.O & Alemika, E.I (1995). Penal crisis and prison management in Nigeria. *Lawyers Bi-Annual* 1, (2), 62-80.
- Azubuikwe, C. (2016). Congestion: Port Harcourt prison now houses 3,824 inmates. *Daily post news papper*.
- Chigozie, I.C. & Ajah, A.O. (2011). Holding charge and pre-trial detention visa-vis the doctrine of fair hearing in Nigeria. *The lawyers Chronicals*.
- Chinedu, C. (2022). Rivers State Chief Justice blames Nigeria police for prison congestion. *Daily post* Nov. 22, 2022.
- Coyle, A (2000). Restorative Justice in the prison setting. Information centre for prison studies. Wikidaepia.
- Dugger A.& Evie, L. (2022). *History of prisons*. Study press.
- Emerho, G. (2016). Factors affecting the correctional functions of prisons in Nigeria: A study of Aguata and Onitsha prisons. A thesis submitted to the department of sociology/anthropology. Nnamdi Azikiwe University.
- Igbo, E.M.(2008). *Aetiology of crime: perspectives in theoretical criminology*. New Generation Books.
- Igbo, E.U.M. (1990). *Introduction to criminology*. Holt Rinehart and Winston/Praeger.
- International Centre for Investigative Reporting (2023). Trends of prison congestion. ICIR Nigeria.org
- Jarma, I.M. (1999). Prison and reformation of offenders in A.B Dambazau, M.M; Jumare & A.M Yakubu (Eds). *Issues in crime prevention and Central in Nigeria*. Baraka Press.
- John, T. (2020). Port Harcourt correctional centre most populated in Nigeria. *Suunewsonline.com*.
- Losipov, P. (2022). Nigerian prisons services. *Wikipedia*.
- Naku, D. (2022). Inmates on death row in Rivers State hit 442. *Punch.com* [https/ punch-com- inmate-on-death-row- in- Rivers](https://punch-com-inmate-on-death-row-in-Rivers).
- Ndifon, C.O. (2012). Criminality and sactions: The rhetoric and reality of Nigerian penal policy. *American Journal of Scientific Research*, Issues 63 (2012) Euro Journals publishing Inc.
- Obialo, M. (2023). List of all prisons in Nigeria and their locations. *Nigerian guide*. Nigerianguide.com.ng/list-of-all-prisons-in-Nigeria-and-their-locations. Retrieved 16-5-2023.
- Odeniyi, S. (2023). F.G to stop feeding state inmates in 2024. *Punch Newspapers* 12 May, 2023.
- Orakwe, I.W (2022). The origin of corrections in Nigeria. *Nigerian Correctional Service*.
- Osinbajo, Y. (2018). Port Harcourt prison has 5,000 inmates instead of 800. *This Day Newspaper*.
- Oti, I.C. (2016). *Inmates in Nigeria prisons*. Learners publishers.

- Ottong, J.G. (2014). *The study of sociology: A conceptual approach*. Adonai publishing house.
- Temibiage, L. (2010). *Security and crime prevention*. The Prison Transformation Digest.
- Ugwuoke, C.U & Ameh, S.O. (2014). *Rehabilitation of convicts in Nigerian prisons: A study of federal prisons in Kogi State*. *Research on Humanities and social sciences* 4, (26), 50-61.
- Ugwuoke, C.U. (2010). *Criminology: Explaining crime in the Nigeria Context*. Great AP express publishers Ltd.
- Ukwai, J.K; Adewoyin, SA.; John, T.O.& Ofem, N.O. (2017). *Public perception of small arms epidemic and conflict in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State*. *The international Journal of Humanities & social studies* 5(2) 100-108.
- Walmsley, R. (2001). *An over view of worlds imprisonment: global prison populations, trends and solutions*, UN Technical Assistance workshop. May 10.