

**PRISON OVERPOPULATION AND REHABILITATION OUTCOMES:
LESSONS FROM ADO-EKITI CORRECTIONAL CENTRE****Dr. Adebayo Olumide Funke**

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.19661707

Abstract

The persistent overcrowding of Nigerian correctional facilities underscores a critical weakness in the criminal justice system, particularly the underutilization of non-custodial alternatives. As of 2019, Nigerian prisons housed approximately 49,000 inmates across 234 facilities, with only 20% being convicted offenders and the remaining 80% awaiting trial. This imbalance has created conditions where basic needs such as adequate sleeping space, food, healthcare, and rehabilitative programs are insufficiently met. Furthermore, the lack of infrastructure, trained personnel, and awareness of alternative sentencing options contributes to the continued reliance on custodial sentences, intensifying the overcrowding crisis. The situation is further complicated by inadequate separation of different categories of inmates—juveniles from adults, convicted from awaiting-trial prisoners—resulting in unsafe and unproductive prison environments. This study explores the challenges of prison overcrowding in Nigeria and emphasizes the urgent need to adopt effective non-custodial strategies to improve inmate welfare and promote sustainable rehabilitation.

Keywords: Prison overcrowding, Non-custodial alternatives, Nigerian criminal justice, Rehabilitation, Correctional strategies

INTRODUCTION

The significant underuse of non-custodial options reflects a gap in the Nigerian criminal justice system's ability to adopt and implement progressive correctional strategies effectively. The lack of infrastructure, training, and awareness surrounding these alternatives further perpetuates reliance on custodial sentences, exacerbating the overcrowding crisis.

The Nigerian correctional centers as at 2019 was housing 49,000 in two hundred and thirty four prisons out of which 20% are convicts while the rest are awaiting trial inmates (Latessa and Allen, 2019). This imaginable condition of overcrowding is relatively easy to recognise when one sees it situations where there is no enough room for prisoners to sleep; no facilities to provide enough food, health care or any form of constructive activities; insufficient staff to ensure that prisoners are safe; lack of accommodation to hold separately types of prisoners who should be kept apart- juveniles from adult; awaiting trails from convicted , or lack of capacity to admit any more numbers so that emergency measures have to be taken in the form of amnesty, emergency accommodation or the holding of prisoners in police custody.

The aim of imprisonment according to section 2(4) of the Nigerian Prison Act (1972) is to endeavour to identify the reason for anti- social behaviour of the offenders; to train, rehabilitate and reform them to be good and useful citizens. It is therefore expected that the recidivism will decrease if the objective of imprisonment is achieved by planning and providing proper rehabilitation of prisoners (Dinitz and Dine, 2019). This will enable them to be

law abiding citizens of the society and engage in productive activities for their daily living on release from prison. Worldwide, prisons are places where offenders are held so as to undergo reformation and become law abiding citizens. The conditions of overcrowding, cruelty and captivity derails the prisons core function of rehabilitation. Humane living conditions are a prerequisite for the successful rehabilitation. The rehabilitation of prison inmates should begin from the very day they are admitted into the prison to the day they are discharged (Igbo, 2007). Prison reforms aim at bringing best practices in the treatment of offenders and management of prison in general. Penal reforms being undertaken are in line with global trend to shift prison from a punitive and retributive penal system to a reformatory and rehabilitative system.

Overcrowding in Nigeria prisons occurs where the numbers of prisoners exceeds prison capacity to an extent inmates cannot be housed in a humane, healthy and psychological manner. In Nigeria, overcrowding is generally called congestion. It constitutes a serious challenge in Nigeria prisons especially in prisons located in the metropolitan cities. In such prisons, cells in Nigeria, facilities hold as many as twice or thrice their capacity. In such cells there is hardly enough room for prison inmates to move body and limbs freely. In such state each prisoner is allocated a “post” which approximately is a space of a foot and a half.

Majority of the prisons in Nigeria are congested and overcrowded and this create enormous problem in prison management process in terms of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration. The capacity of Nigerian prisons has remained virtually the same for the past two decades notwithstanding the alarming increase in prison population. These prisons were built by the colonial administration and native authority predating to the era Nigeria gain independence in 1960. The conditions of these prisons are in an alarming state of despair with no sense of maintenance or renovation reflective of long neglect by the Nigeria government. In fact, most of the prisons constructed at this period are old, in bad shape and at the brinks of collapse. However, few prisons have been constructed with most substandard materials, which are a far cry from modern prisons across the globe. Examples of such new prisons include, Gusua Medium Prison, Kebbi new Prisons (1991), Medium Security Prisons Kirikiri (1993), Funtia (2003), Oyo and Eket Prisons (2007) respectively.

Inmates in prisons need some form of rehabilitation most especially those convicted in error and circumstances of nature to make them fit in back into the society. Criminal rehabilitation is therefore essentially the process of providing and helping inmates grow and change while recreational education provides opportunity for the inmates to continue from where they stopped before been confined into the walls of prisons (Ebue and Ezegebe, 2015). Both rehabilitation and recreation allow them separates themselves from the environmental problems or challenges that made them commit crimes in the first place and allow them to think of prospective years ahead after serving their terms. Rehabilitation idea is to treat each of major contributing problems in order to provide inmates with the ability to live a free crime life after they are discharged from prison.

Prison overcrowding has therefore emerged as a pervasive issue within the Nigerian correctional system, posing serious challenges to effective inmate management, security, and rehabilitation. Overcrowding in prisons is not

merely a logistical problem but a structural challenge that affects the core objectives of correctional facilities: to rehabilitate offenders and prepare them for successful reintegration into society. The Nigerian prison system, with its limited resources, outdated infrastructure, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, has seen an increase in inmate population due to factors such as lengthy pre-trial detentions, limited access to alternative sentencing options, and high rates of recidivism. As a result, many correctional facilities, including the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, now operate well beyond their designed capacities, causing significant strain on resources and diminishing the quality of care provided to inmates.

The impact of overcrowding extends to various aspects of prison life, influencing both the welfare of inmates and the working conditions of correctional staff. Overcrowded facilities often experience increased incidences of violence, poor hygiene conditions, inadequate access to healthcare, and limited opportunities for educational or vocational programs. For inmates, these conditions can have a severe impact on physical and mental health, leading to heightened levels of stress, depression, and even the risk of radicalization. Such environments are hardly conducive to rehabilitative processes, as they limit the ability of correctional centers to implement programs aimed at transforming criminal behavior and reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

Prison overcrowding in Nigeria continues to pose a significant challenge to the correctional system, impeding its ability to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders effectively. As of October 21, 2024, the total population of inmates across Nigerian correctional centers reached 84,165. Out of this population, 27,178 (32%) are convicted, while a substantial 56,987 individuals (68%) are awaiting trial, reflecting severe inefficiencies within the judicial process. This stark imbalance indicates that over two-thirds of Nigeria's prison population consists of individuals who have not yet been convicted, with lengthy pre-trial detentions contributing to the severe overcrowding within these facilities. (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2024)

The overcrowding crisis has far-reaching implications on the welfare of inmates, as well as the ability of correctional staff to maintain order and implement rehabilitative programs. Correctional centers, operating beyond capacity, face challenges in providing adequate living conditions, access to healthcare, and protection against the spread of infectious diseases. The situation is particularly dire for male inmates, who constitute 98% of the population, while female inmates, though a smaller demographic at 2%, face unique challenges within a system primarily designed for male inmates. Overcrowded facilities further exacerbate the risk of violence, deteriorating mental health, and limited access to educational or vocational programs, all of which are essential to successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

The continued reliance on prolonged detention for individuals awaiting trial highlights systemic gaps in Nigeria's legal and correctional systems, including slow judicial processes, limited access to alternative sentencing options, and a lack of investment in correctional infrastructure. These deficiencies compromise not only the rehabilitation process but also the safety and mental wellbeing of both inmates and staff, creating environments more punitive than corrective.

Despite existing non-custodial sentencing options in Nigeria, such as community service, parole, probation, and restorative justice, their usage remains minimal relative to the scale of the prison population. With only 521

individuals (less than 1% of the total inmate population) currently serving non-custodial sentences, it is evident that these alternatives are underutilized. While noncustodial measures like community service (394 individuals), probation (7 individuals), and restorative justice (104 individuals) provide opportunities to reduce prison populations, a lack of widespread implementation restricts their potential impact. (NCoS, 2024).

The significant underuse of non-custodial options reflects a gap in the legal and correctional framework, highlighting a critical need for systemic reform. This study will investigate the impact of prison overcrowding on the Nigerian correctional system and the rehabilitation of offenders, focusing on the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center. Through this analysis, the study will identify barriers to implementing non-custodial measures effectively and propose solutions for judicial reforms, expanded sentencing options, and infrastructural improvements that can alleviate overcrowding and enhance rehabilitative outcomes in Nigerian correctional facilities.

The case of the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center provides a microcosm of the broader challenges faced by the Nigerian prison system. Despite its capacity constraints, the facility houses a significant number of inmates, both convicted and awaiting trial, reflecting systemic inefficiencies. This study seeks to investigate the specific causes and consequences of overcrowding at this facility, examining its effects on rehabilitation programs, inmate welfare, and correctional staff's operational capacity. Furthermore, the research aims to explore potential solutions, including the expansion of non-custodial sentencing, judicial reforms, and investments in correctional infrastructure.

By focusing on the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the systemic issues underpinning prison overcrowding in Nigeria. The study's findings will inform policy recommendations and advocate for reforms to create a more humane and rehabilitative correctional system, ensuring that the Nigerian prison system aligns with international best practices and fulfills its rehabilitative mandate.

Research consistently identifies overcrowding as a critical challenge within correctional facilities, with studies across Nigeria and globally reporting capacities often exceeding their design limits. For instance, a study by Joseph et al. (2021) highlights that correctional centers in Nigeria frequently operate beyond capacity, driven by high inmate admissions and prolonged pretrial detention. Nnam (2016) argues that delays within the Nigerian judicial system, leading to prolonged detention periods for awaiting-trial inmates, are a primary factor contributing to overcrowding. Studies like those of Mbanjo (2024) further suggest that a lack of alternative sentencing options exacerbates this issue, as minor offenders are frequently sentenced to imprisonment instead of non-custodial options, such as community service.

Comparative research from Geegbe et al. (2022) on prison overcrowding in Liberia reveals similar challenges, where economic constraints and limited judicial capacity contribute to high inmate numbers. In both the Nigerian and Liberian contexts, researchers emphasize the role of recidivism, where inadequate rehabilitation efforts lead to repeat offenses, thereby adding pressure on already strained facilities. Overcrowding is thus not merely an issue of physical space but reflects systemic inefficiencies in judicial processes and correctional policies.

Overcrowding has significant implications for the operational efficiency and resource management of correctional centers. Research by Aliyu (2018) on Nigerian correctional facilities found that overcrowded conditions often stretch essential services, such as healthcare and food provision, beyond capacity. According to Ikoh (2011), correctional staff in overcrowded centers face increased workloads, as they struggle to manage high inmate numbers with limited resources. This overextension of staff can lead to lower morale, higher rates of staff burnout, and compromised security within facilities.

A similar study conducted in the United States (Sabol & Johnson, 2016) highlights that overcrowding strains institutional resources, leading to reduced access to basic amenities and healthcare services for inmates. The shortage of beds, hygiene supplies, and medical resources increases the risk of health issues and diminishes the facility's ability to maintain adequate living standards. In the Nigerian context, Peter et al. (2023) further note that limited resources impact correctional center operations, as daily activities are disrupted due to an insufficient supply of essential items, such as food and sanitation materials. This inefficiency impedes the center's ability to fulfill its rehabilitative and custodial functions.

The impact of overcrowding on inmates' well-being is well-documented, with overcrowded facilities linked to adverse physical and mental health outcomes. Research by Joseph et al. (2021) suggests that the lack of personal space and inadequate sanitation within overcrowded Nigerian correctional centers increases the risk of infectious disease outbreaks, such as tuberculosis and skin infections. Furthermore, the psychological effects of overcrowding are profound; Aliyu (2018) reports that overcrowded environments heighten inmate stress, anxiety, and aggression due to the constant lack of privacy and increased exposure to potentially hostile interactions.

A study by Stephen & Dudafa (2016) corroborates these findings, noting that overcrowding exacerbates inmates' mental health conditions, often leading to feelings of hopelessness and an increased risk of depression. In their study on overcrowding's effect on inmates in Nigeria, they found that a shortage of mental health services further compounds these issues, leaving inmates without adequate support systems. Global research supports this trend, with findings by Wooldredge (2018) in the UK indicating that overcrowding correlates with elevated rates of mental health deterioration, behavioral issues, and self-harm among inmates.

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs are often compromised in overcrowded correctional facilities, limiting inmates' ability to reform and successfully reintegrate post-release. Research by Abrifor et al. (2023) highlights that overcrowding reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in Nigerian correctional centers by restricting individualized attention and support for inmates. Due to the high inmate-to-staff ratio, rehabilitative programs such as counseling, vocational training, and educational services become less accessible. This lack of access undermines the goal of corrections as inmates are unable to acquire the skills and psychological support necessary for reintegration.

Ikpa (2020) observes that limited infrastructure and high inmate populations in Nigerian correctional facilities create logistical challenges, which further hinder the implementation of effective rehabilitation programs. Studies from Geegbe et al. (2022) on the Liberian prison system provide similar insights, indicating that overcrowding disrupts the structured environment needed for rehabilitation activities, diminishing the chances of successful

reintegration. Nnam (2016) proposes that addressing overcrowding through alternative sentencing and increased mental health support could significantly improve the effectiveness of reintegration efforts, a recommendation supported by Peter et al. (2023), who emphasize the need for increased support in non-custodial measures to reduce prison congestion and promote rehabilitation.

Considering the act of imprisonment as the most effective form of sanctions of offenders, nevertheless, in the last few decades, inmate's population in Nigeria have grown substantially, to the extent leading to overcrowding. The overcrowding tends to alter the psychological, physiological and behavioural wellbeing of the inmates (Dambazau, 2017). The massive influx of inmates that begun in recent times as a result of delay in judiciary process has produced a rate of growth in the nation's inmates population that scholars and legal commentators have repeatedly described and characterized as unprecedented. Aduba (2005) reported that the total prison capacity during the period of 1978 to 1981 was 27,257, but it was revealed that in 1978, the average monthly population was 32,332; in 1979 it was 34,770; in 1980, it was 35,332; and in 1981 it was 38,477 (Nigeria prison services, 1978-1981). The percentage of overcrowding thus was 18.61% in 1978, 27.56% in 1979, 29.43% in 1980, and 41.16% in 1981.

The Nigerian correctional centers as at 2019 was housing 49,000 in two hundred and thirty four prisons out of which 20% are convicts while the rest are awaiting trial inmates (Latessa and Allen, 2019). This unimaginable condition of overcrowding is relatively easy to recognise when one sees it situations where there is no enough room for prisoners to sleep; no facilities to provide enough food, health care or any form of constructive activities; insufficient staff to ensure that prisoners are safe; lack of accommodation to hold separately types of prisoners who should be kept apart- juveniles from adult; awaiting trails from convicted, or lack of capacity to admit any more numbers so that emergency measures have to be taken in the form of amnesty, emergency accommodation or the holding of prisoners in police custody.

Despite the noble objectives of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration which the Nigerian prison system embarks on to ensure that criminals become changed persons, the realization of this objective has been obstructed by certain factors. (Inciardi, 2019) asserted that the rate at which exconvicts are returning to jail is alarming. Reformation of prisoners has not been effective as every year criminals who become more hardened and deadly are released as against changed individuals expected by the society. Inciardi further stated that prisons have in modern times become training ground and school for a new category of criminals and patterns of crime unknown to the society.

Despite the efforts being made by the government, the conditions in Nigerian prison system are so poor that they violate basic human rights. Prison inmates are crowded into dark, dirty cells, without adequate food, sanitation or health care. Some suffer permanent damage to their physical or mental health as a result. Most have not been convicted of any crime. The vast majority are people living in poverty, without access to lawyers and with few financial resources.

This runs contrary to what the prison experience is meant to accomplish in the lives of those who transit through them. Prisons are essentially correctional and reformatory, they are not institutions for the dehumanization for

the incarcerated. According to the Nigerian prison Act of 1972, which spells out the goals and orientation of the Nigerian prison service, Prison are charged with taking custody of those legally detained, identifying causes of their behaviour and retraining them to become useful citizens in the society. The administration of Mohammad Buhari, in August, 2019 signed into law the change of name of the Nigerian prison service to the Nigerian correctional service this is in order to kick start the long-awaited reform in the prison sector, this new image will make the prison function as a more correctional institution rather than a mere shelter for persons serving jail terms.

Correction in overcrowded environment is an impossible task and in recent years, prison overcrowding has become a serious problem indeed; moreover, it has become an elusive phenomenon, Overcrowding seems even to represent a characteristic, troubling the modern prison since its invention in the 19th century (Albrecht, 2018). Environmental irritants such as noise, lack of privacy and territory, overcrowding, and lack of color can lead to aggressive behavior, particularly in individuals already prone to violence (Inciardi, 2019). It is on this backdrop that the need to determine the impact of overcrowding on the Nigerian Prison System and the rehabilitation of offenders.

Rekiya and Dean (2023) conducted a study on 'Understanding Prisons Rehabilitation Programmes in Nigeria: Lessons from the Correctional Facilities in Imo State, Nigeria'. The objectives of the study include the examination of the types of rehabilitation programmes, how the programmes are conceived and implemented as well as to determine the effectiveness of the programmes in terms of making inmates better people. To achieve these objectives as well as evaluate related questions and hypotheses, both primary and secondary data were sourced from respondents and used. The respondents were selected using the simple random sampling method. To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane formula was utilized. Consequently, a total of 380 inmates, 12 staff and 12 instructors were questioned. Data analysis was done using simple percentages, descriptive models and chi square (χ^2) statistical technique. The empirical result indicated that the calculated value for χ^2 for each of the three hypotheses were higher than the table value is of 7.81. The chi square computation was done at 3 degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.05. The results provided justification for the rejection of all three null hypothetical statements and acceptance of their alternates. The findings therefore show that there are several types of rehabilitation programmes but carpentry is overemphasised. Also, the top-to-bottom approach of conceiving and implanting the programmes undermine its effectiveness. It was recommended among others that there should be widespread stakeholder consultation in the design, conception and implementation of prison rehabilitation programmes. This will go a long way to ensure wider input that will make the programmes better. Geegbe, Mbabazize, Katuramu, Barigayomwe and Alloysius (2022) investigated the effects of prison overcrowding on the rehabilitation of inmates in Monrovia Central Prison, Liberia. The study aimed at achieving the following objectives to identify the effectiveness of inmates incarceration on behavior change in Monrovia Central Prison, to examine how prison overcrowding affects the self - sustainability of inmates in Monrovia Central Prison to determine the relevance of vocational education for inmates in Monrovia Central Prison and to establish the relationship between prison overcrowding and vocational education for inmates in Monrovia Central

Prison, Liberia. Key informant interview guide was designed and administered to key informants to capture qualitative information. Data from questionnaire were edited and coded then entered in a computer and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) program was used to analyze it. The percentage number of respondents according to variables such as; sex, age, objectives and so on were computed and presented using tables. Prison overcrowding and its effects on the rehabilitation of inmates was established using Pearson Linear Correlations Coefficient Statistical Method. Findings revealed that the effectiveness of inmates' incarceration on behavior change in Monrovia Central Prison has the overall mean or had a value of 2.582 and standard deviation of 66.3%. This implies that inmates are likely to change their behaviors after all they have been jailed and released later on. Findings revealed that the Prison overcrowding affects the self-sustainability of inmates in Monrovia Central Prison had a mean rated to 2.713 and standard deviation of 0.795 estimated to 79.5%. The researcher concluded that there is a need to explore the Effectiveness of inmates incarceration on behavior change in Monrovia Central Prison. The second objective was to investigate the extent to which prison overcrowding affects the self-sustainability of inmates in Monrovia Central Prison in Liberia. The study results based on a Pearson's Correlation revealed that there is a positive and weak relationship between prison overcrowding and rehabilitation programs at Monrovia Central Prison, Liberia The researcher recommended that the government of Liberia should protect prisoners' physical and mental health. That is to say: the time prisoners spend out of their cells may be increased, with maximum possible time spent in the open air.

Olojede and Mohammed (2020) studied the Effectiveness of Nigeria Correctional Service in Rehabilitation of Convicts Into New Life Through Recreational Education in Niger State. The paper reported an outcome of a study conducted on the Correctional Services in Minna, Niger

State. From a population of 635 inmates, a sample of 62 was used for the study representing 10%. The study adopted exploratory research design. Interview and Focus Group Discussion drawn from the five research questions were used as instruments. Findings showed that much have not been provided in terms recreational education activities because of the nature of the prisons, hence rehabilitation of the convicts into new life after serving their terms is not promoted. It was established that many of the equipments in the Correctional Homes are outdated which do not go along with the demand of 21st century. The paper advocated a friendlier Correctional Services as enshrined in fundamental Human Rights.

Cheche, Nwabuna and Ikpa (2020) in their study 'Reducing Overcrowding in Nigerian Prisons: A Correctional Architectural Approach, Case Studies of Afikpo, Okigwe and Owerri Correctional Facilities' suggested ways overcrowding can be reduced in spaces occupied by inmates with a view to facilitate correction and bring to the fore the architect's role in prison design in reducing overcrowding and enhancing reformation. The objective includes; x-raying the evolution of prison architecture and the relationship between overcrowding and architectural space and suggesting a design approach that reduces overcrowding and facilitates reformation. This research was carried out through critical and in-depth study of books, periodicals, internet sources, statistical data mainly from Nigeria was obtained and applied, reports from government and relevant bodies or agencies shall be consulted other related literature and case studies will be carried out. Results shows that design approach have

always played vital role in reducing overcrowding and could provide a veritable solution to inmate rehabilitation and correction.

Emerho (2016) examined factors affecting the Correctional Functions of Prisons in Nigeria: A Study Of Aguata And Onitsha Prisons. The study was aimed at evaluating the various internal and external factors which influence the correction of inmate in Aguata and Onitsha prisons. Marxian theory of social conflict was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 significant levels for the study. The sample size for the study comprised 301 respondents, cutting across Prison inmates and Prison staff. The sampling technique for the study was the Proportionate sampling technique. The structured questionnaire and In-depth Interview (IDI) guide served as the instruments for data collection. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to code and analyze the quantitative data. This entailed the use of descriptive and Chi-square inferential statistics to present the data and test the formulated hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that the internal factors influencing the correction of inmates include: Staff briefing inmates on any matter that affects them (effective communication), inmates using the goodwill of prison officials to meet some of their pressing needs outside the prison walls, prison environment being kept very clean and hygienic, inmates being fed and clothed properly, and attitude of prison officials towards inmates. The external factors include: cordial relationship between the prisons and their host communities, the activities of faith-based organizations and nongovernmental organizations and prompt releases of finance from the government. Also, the findings indicate that corrupt practices among prison officials, insufficient prison cells, lack of functional correctional facilities, power struggle between prison staff, poor communication between prison staff and inmates, inequitable distribution of resources meant for prison inmates and poor working attitude of some of the prison staff were some of the constraints to the correctional functions of the prisons. However, the study recommends proactive steps urgent legislation on realistic prisons reforms and policies that would emphasize on eradicating corruption among the prisons officials and increase in the budgetary allocations for the prisons.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent of overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center and identify contributing factors.
2. To assess the effects of overcrowding on the daily operations and resources of the Ado Ekiti Correctional Center.
3. To evaluate how overcrowding affects the rehabilitation and reintegration programs available to inmates.

METHOD AND RESULTS

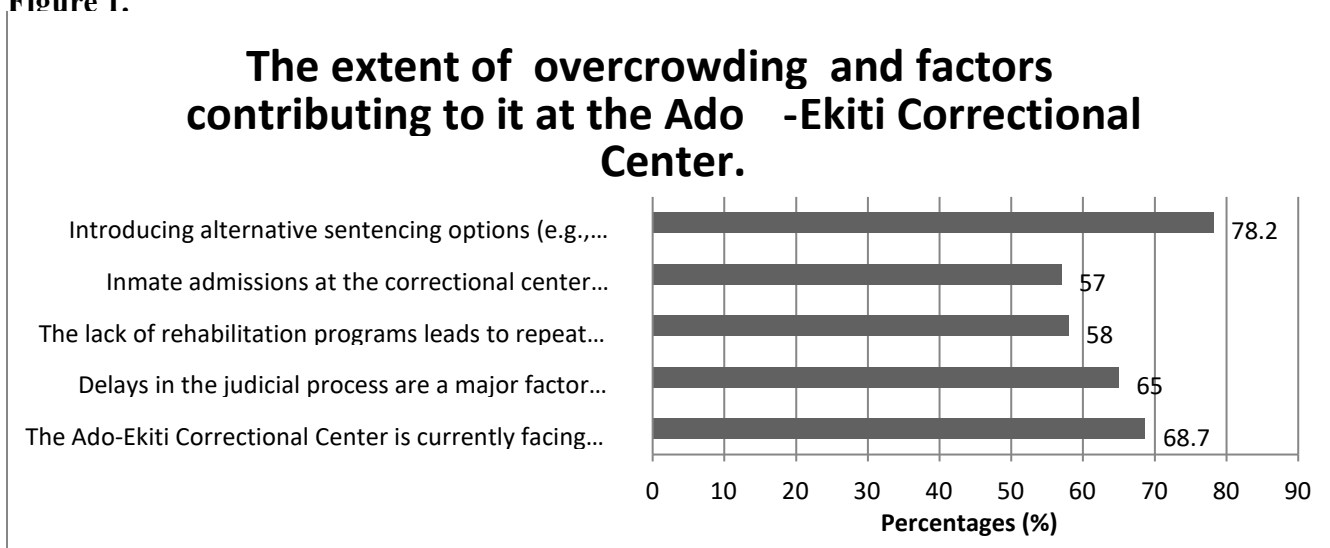
This study adopts a survey research design, utilizing a questionnaire to gather data from a representative sample of inmates at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center. This approach facilitates efficient data collection from a small sample that represents the larger population. Furthermore, the study population comprises the 892 inmates at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, which exceeds its official capacity of 240. The population includes 226 convicted inmates, 440 awaiting trial, 59 lifers, and 167 condemned inmates, according to the Nigerian Prison Record Unit (2024). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across inmate categories.

Using the Taro Yamane formula at a 0.05 significance level, a sample size of 138 was derived for the study. While a semi-structured questionnaire, comprising open- and closed-ended questions, will serve as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire is designed to address the research objectives and hypotheses. Ethical standards will be strictly adhered to, ensuring respondents' privacy and dignity throughout the study. Finally descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages, and Chi-Square will be used to analyse the quantitative data that will be gleaned from the distribution of questionnaires.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the extent of overcrowding at the AdoEkiti Correctional Center, and what are the contributing factors

S/N	Statements	SA	A	SD	D
1	The Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center is currently facing a severe overcrowding issue	64 (46.3%)	31 (22.4%)	13 (9.4%)	30 (21.7%)
2	Delays in the judicial process are a major factor contributing to overcrowding in the facility	55 (40%)	34 (25%)	23 (17%)	26 (19%)
3	The lack of rehabilitation programs leads to repeat offenses, which increases overcrowding.	34 (25%)	45 (33%)	24 (17%)	35 (25%)
4	Inmate admissions at the correctional center frequently outpace releases, worsening overcrowding	38 (28%)	40 (29%)	31 (22.4%)	29 (21%)
5	Introducing alternative sentencing options (e.g., community service) could help reduce overcrowding	53 (38.4%)	48 (34.7%)	17 (12%)	20 (14.4%)

Figure 1.



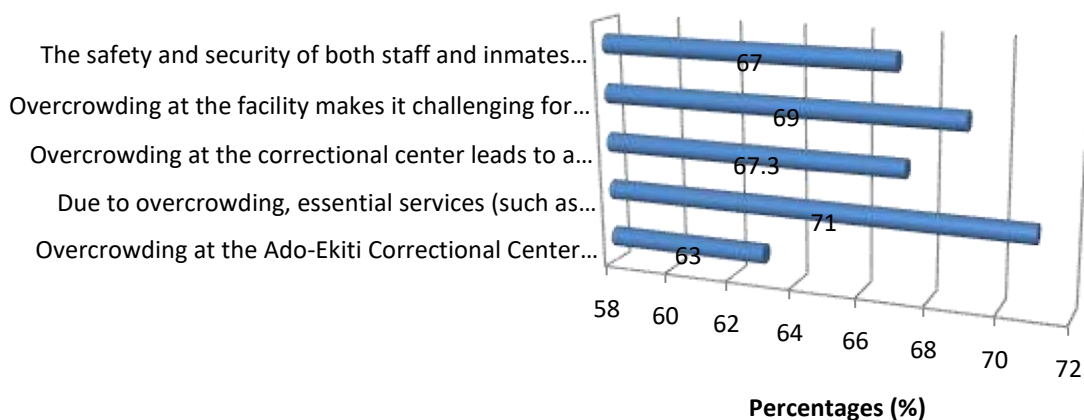
Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, (2024)

The Data from Table 2 and Figure 1 above revealed that there is overcrowding at the Ado Ekiti Correctional Center. The percentage distribution of respondents on the extent of overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, and the contributing factors. (68.7%) of the respondents agreed both in strong and mild terms that there is indeed overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center. while More than half of the respondents 58% affirmed that The lack of rehabilitation programs leads to repeat offenses, which increases overcrowding. 78 respondents representing (57%) agreed together that Inmate admissions at the correctional center frequently outpace releases, worsening overcrowding Overwhelming majority (72.8%) of respondents acknowledges the fact that Introducing alternative sentencing options like community service could help reduce overcrowding.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Respondents on the how overcrowding affects the daily operations and resource management of the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center

S/N	Statements	SA	A	SD	D	
1	Overcrowding at the Ado Ekiti Correctional Center negatively impacts daily operational efficiency	56 (40.5%)	27 (22.4%)	35 (9.4%)	20 (19.5%)	
2	Due to overcrowding, essential services (such as healthcare and food provision) are often stretched beyond capacity	67 (22.4%)	31 (9.4%)	13 (19.5%)	27 (48.5%)	
3	Overcrowding at the correctional center leads to a shortage of basic supplies (e.g., beds, sanitation materials) for inmates	58 (42%)	35 (25.3%)	22 (16%)	23 (16.6%)	
4	Overcrowding at the facility makes it challenging for staff to adequately monitor and manage inmate behavior	54 (30%)	41 (22.4%)	31 (8.7%)	12 (39%)	

Effects of overcrowding on the daily operations and resource management of the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center



Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, (2024)

5 The safety and security of 34 58 18 28 both staff and inmates are (24.6%) (42.%) (13%) (20%) compromised due to the overcrowded conditions Figure 2.

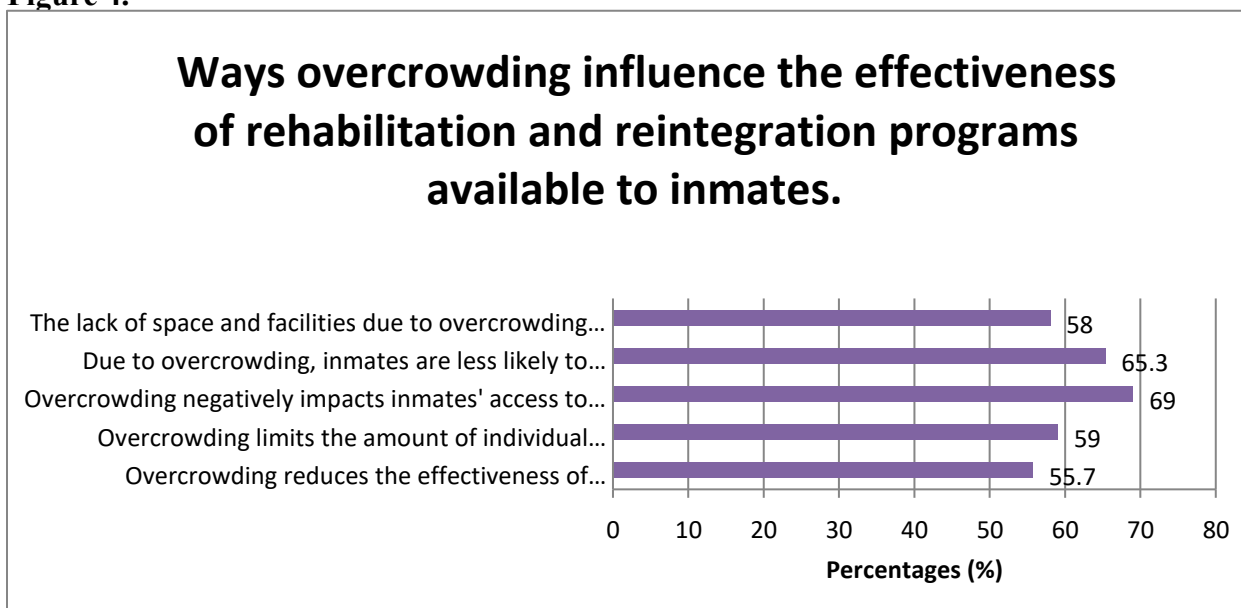
The Data from Table 3 and Figure 2 above revealed that Overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center negatively impacts daily operational efficiency of the facility. (63%) of the respondents agreed both in strong and mild terms that Overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center has negatively impacts daily operational efficiency of the facility. While an overwhelming majority of the respondents 71% affirmed that Due to overcrowding, essential services such as healthcare and food provision are often stretched beyond capacity. 93 respondents representing (67.3%) agreed together that Overcrowding at the correctional center leads to a shortage of basic supplies such as beds, sanitation materials for inmates Majority (69%) of respondents acknowledges the fact that Overcrowding at the facility makes it challenging for staff to adequately monitor and manage inmate behavior. Furthermore, 67% of the respondents believed that the safety and security of both staff and inmates are compromised due to the overcrowded conditions.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Respondents on how overcrowding influence the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs available to inmates.

S/N	Statements	SA	A	SD	D
1	Overcrowding reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs among inmates.	34 (30.4%)	48 (25.3%)	26 (18.1%)	30 (26%)

2	Overcrowding limits the amount of individual attention and support inmates receive in rehabilitation programs	47 (34%)	34 (24.6%)	27 (19.5%)	20 (14.4%)
3	Overcrowding negatively impacts inmates' access to counseling and mental health support needed for successful reintegration.	39 (39%)	44 (30%)	28 (14.4%)	27 (16.6%)
4	Due to overcrowding, inmates are less likely to complete rehabilitation programs successfully before release.	35 (33.3%)	47 (32%)	32 (25.3%)	24 (9.4%)
5	The lack of space and facilities due to overcrowding hampers the delivery of effective reintegration programs.	47 (22.4%)	39 (35.5%)	27 (20.2%)	25 (22%)

Figure 4.



Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork, (2024)

The Data from Table 5 and Figure 4 above revealed several ways in which overcrowding influences the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs among inmates? with 55.7% of the respondents agreeing both in strong and mild terms that Overcrowding reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs

among inmates. Main while majority of the respondents 59% affirmed that Overcrowding limits the amount of individual attention and support inmates receive in rehabilitation programs. 83 respondents representing (69%) agreed together that Overcrowding negatively impacts inmates' access to counseling and mental health support needed for successful reintegration. 82 respondents representing (65.3%) of respondents acknowledges that Overcrowding negatively impacts inmates' access to counseling and mental health support needed for successful reintegration. Furthermore, 58% of the respondents believed that the lack of space and facilities due to overcrowding hampers the delivery of effective reintegration programs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study sought to investigate the Impact of Prison Overcrowding on the Nigerian Correctional System and Offender's Rehabilitation. With the Ado-Ekiti, Correctional Center as a case study. The findings from the survey conducted at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center reveal a significant issue of overcrowding and its multiplier effects on facility operations, inmate well-being, and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. Four objectives was raised to guide this research work.

Extent of Overcrowding and Contributing Factors

The data from the study indicate that 68.7% of respondents recognize the presence of severe overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, with more than half attributing this to high recidivism rates due to inadequate rehabilitation programs. This observation is consistent with the findings of Mbanjo (2024), who emphasized the role of vocational and rehabilitation programs in mitigating overcrowding by reducing recidivism rates. Moreover, 57% of respondents indicated that inmate admissions frequently outpace releases, which parallels the results of Nnam (2016), who argued that delays in judicial processes contribute to prolonged detentions and exacerbate overcrowding in Nigerian correctional centers.

Interestingly, a majority (72.8%) of respondents suggested that alternative sentencing options, such as community service, could alleviate overcrowding. This aligns with Ohazulike and Chikwendu's (2023) research, which highlighted the impact of alternative sentencing on reducing inmate populations in Nigerian prisons. However, the implementation of such measures remains limited, suggesting a gap between recommendations and policy actions.

Impact of Overcrowding on Facility Operations and Resource Management

The findings from this study reveal that 63% of respondents believe overcrowding negatively impacts daily operations, as the correctional center struggles to maintain efficient management under such high inmate numbers. This aligns with Joseph et al. (2021), who demonstrated that prison overcrowding in Nigeria affects the availability of essential resources like food and medical supplies. Additionally, 71% of respondents affirmed that essential services are stretched beyond capacity, further findings from Popoola et al. (2023) also reveals that overburdened facilities cannot meet the basic needs of inmates.

Further, 67% of participants noted a shortage of basic supplies such as beds and sanitation materials, echoing Ikpa (2020), who linked overcrowding to insufficient correctional infrastructure. The challenge of maintaining order and security was also significant, with 69% of respondents indicating that overcrowding makes monitoring

and managing inmate behavior challenging. This is in line with Peter et al., who discussed how high inmate-to-staff ratios compromise security and lead to unrest within facilities. However, compared to Geegbe et al. (2022), who studied prison overcrowding in Liberia, our findings highlight more specific impacts on operational logistics and resource distribution in Nigerian correctional centers.

Impact on Inmate Physical and Mental Well-being

The data underscore the detrimental impact of overcrowding on inmates' physical and mental health, as 55.7% of respondents noted a heightened risk of infectious disease spread due to cramped conditions. This finding correlates with Joseph et al. (2021), who documented similar health risks arising from overcrowding in Nigerian prisons. Furthermore, 60% of respondents reported that lack of personal space leads to stress and anxiety among inmates, an outcome aligned with Abrifor et al. (2023), who observed the psychological toll overcrowding takes on incarcerated individuals.

Violence and aggression were also significant concerns, with 69% of respondents acknowledging that overcrowding increases violent incidents. This supports Geegbe et al. (2022), who identified overcrowding as a catalyst for conflict among inmates. Additionally, 65.3% of respondents stated that mental health support is insufficient under overcrowded conditions, which aligns with Stephen and Dudafa (2016), who found that the lack of resources for mental health care exacerbates inmates' feelings of hopelessness. Our findings also extend these insights by showing that 58% of respondents believed overcrowding worsens mental well-being, suggesting a cumulative impact of physical and mental strain on inmates.

Impact on Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs

Overcrowding was found to significantly impact rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, with 55.7% of respondents indicating that overcrowding reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. This aligns with Abrifor et al. (2023), who argued that the high inmate population limits access to effective rehabilitation services. Furthermore, 59% of respondents believed that overcrowding restricts individual attention and support for inmates, a challenge also highlighted by Ikoh (2011), who emphasized that limited resources prevent tailored support for inmates.

The findings from this study show that 69% of respondents see overcrowding as a barrier to accessing counseling and mental health services, necessary for successful reintegration, supporting Popoola et al. (2023) who noted the inadequacy of mental health resources in correctional facilities. Additionally, 58% of respondents pointed out that overcrowding hampers the delivery of effective reintegration programs due to space and facility limitations, which resonates with Ogwezzy et al. (2016).

Thus, the findings of this indicate a clear indication of the negative effects of overcrowding in correctional facilities, including the impact on operational efficiency, inmate well-being, and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. The findings of this study collaborate the studies carried out by Mbanjo (2024), Popoola et al. (2023), and others which strengthens the argument for urgent reforms in the Nigerian correctional system, such as increased capacity, improved rehabilitation programs, and adoption of alternative sentencing options.

This study further highlights the need for an integrative approach to correctional reform, drawing attention to the multi-dimensional challenges posed by overcrowding, from health risks to barriers in effective reintegration

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center poses significant challenges to the Nigerian correctional system. Overcrowding not only disrupts daily operations but also severely impacts the health, safety, and rehabilitation prospects of inmates. High inmate admissions, limited alternative sentencing options, and the inadequate provision of rehabilitation programs contribute significantly to the overcrowding problem, reflecting broader systemic issues within the Nigerian correctional framework.

The study findings show that overcrowding leads to inadequate resources, stretching essential services like healthcare and sanitation, and compromising inmate well-being. Overcrowding creates an environment where the risk of disease transmission, stress, anxiety, and violence among inmates is high, while insufficient mental health support exacerbates these issues. Furthermore, overcrowding undermines the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs by limiting the individualized support needed to prepare inmates for a successful return to society. These findings of this study align with previous studies, which have similarly found that overcrowding in Nigerian correctional facilities obstructs the intended rehabilitative and corrective functions of the prison system. Thus, addressing overcrowding is essential not only for improving the conditions of inmates but also for enhancing the capacity of correctional centers to fulfill their rehabilitative role effectively. This study underscores the urgent need for practical reforms and alternative sentencing strategies to alleviate the strain on correctional facilities like Ado-Ekiti and to promote a more rehabilitative approach within the Nigerian correctional system

Recommendations

To address overcrowding at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center, the study recommends the following:

1. Implement Alternative Sentencing Programs

The Nigerian judiciary and correctional system should expand non-custodial sentencing options, such as community service, probation, and fines for non-violent offenders. This approach not only reduces the number of inmates but also enables minor offenders to contribute positively to society. A phased rollout of community service programs can be piloted in Ekiti State to gauge effectiveness, with possible expansion across Nigeria if successful.

2. Establish Specialized Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centers

Establishing community-based rehabilitation and reintegration centers outside of prison facilities can help prepare inmates nearing the end of their sentences for reintegration. These centers could offer counseling, skill development, and job placement assistance, allowing prisons to focus on high-security and high-risk inmates while ensuring that rehabilitation remains a priority.

3. Adopt Restorative Justice Practices

Restorative justice, which emphasizes repairing harm caused by crime, could reduce inmate numbers by allowing some offenders to make amends directly to victims or the community without serving prison time. This system

can be especially useful for minor offenders and youth, encouraging a community-based approach to justice that reduces recidivism and promotes societal healing.

4. **Implement a Parole System and Early Release for Eligible Inmates**

Introducing a structured parole system that allows well-behaved inmates to complete part of their sentences in community supervision can alleviate overcrowding. For low-risk, non-violent offenders who have demonstrated good behavior, an early release program with close monitoring and support can reduce prison numbers while maintaining public safety.

5. **Enhance Vocational and Educational Training Programs**

Expanding educational and vocational programs within the correctional center can increase inmates' prospects for successful reintegration. Partnerships with local businesses and NGOs to provide skills training relevant to the regional job market can help prevent recidivism, as inmates will be better equipped to find employment postrelease. These programs could focus on in-demand skills such as carpentry, agriculture, and digital literacy.

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