
Benjamine Okorie Ajah and Joshua O. Nweke

1Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria
2Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ebony State University, Abakiliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Abstract: Welfare is a practical factor that helps every organism to live. Human beings are not left out. In circumstances whereby one's welfare is denied, it tends to affect his/her overall well-being. Like other humans, prisoners’ welfare is essential for their survival. Their welfare provider (government) has failed to make available the needed welfare packages for them. Previous studies on prisons have not focused attention on assessing the degree of welfare provision given to the Nigerian prison inmates. This study therefore assesses the level of welfare provisions made available for prison inmates in Nigeria. The sample was drawn from 307 participants that were made up of 269 prison inmates and 38 prison staff in both Abakaliki and Awka prisons. Stratified random sampling method was adopted. Data were generated through questionnaire administration on demographic characteristics of participants, recreational facilities available in the Nigerian prisons and types of diseases prisoners suffer. Structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons model formed the theoretical framework. Participants were 92.2% males and 7.8% females. Results indicates that the only recreational facility provided in the Nigerian prison system is football (82.4%). Other essential facilities that do not exist are: table tennis (64.8%), basket ball (77.6%), boxing (72.0%) and volleyball (84.7%). The most prominent diseases suffered by prison inmates were: malaria (97.0%), skin related diseases (94.8%), toilet infections (16.4%) and other diseases (16.4%). The study therefore recommends the provision of recreational and medical facilities for prison inmates. This could help in boosting the welfare provisions and boost the quality of health of the inmates.

Key words: Correctional facilities · Prison congestion · Prison inmates · Prison staff · Welfare

INTRODUCTION

For long, so much has been said about the deplorable state of prisons in Nigeria particularly the adverse health implications on inmates due to congestion and negligence by the successive governments. More worrisome is the reality that inmates get hardened after serving their sentences and subsequently frustrate security operatives’ efforts to contain crime in the society.

Instances abound where the prisons have become a training ground for criminals instead of being a corrective home in Nigeria [1]. In observation, the population that gets in and out shows that there are same problems in the system, hence the prison system has not been able to match-up to expectations. The expectations that the Nigerian prisons will impact positively on the lives and vocations of inmates has raised questions that have not yet been completely addressed on the system’s functions and existence [2].

The unsavory nature of Nigerian prisons leaves one in doubt, with too many questions and fewer answers; being that majority of persons become hardened and daring than when they never went behind bars and commit more heinous crimes. Officers and men of Nigerian prisons epitomize corruption and harbor no will to discharge their duties and responsibilities – certainly not satisfied with their conditions of service [3].

Corresponding Author: Joshua O. Nweke, Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ebony State University, Abakiliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.
The Prisons are in a terrible shambles, while the congestion rate among the inmates especially those awaiting trial is so high that the population capacity of 30,000 inmates is hosting over 58,000 inmates. Its infrastructures and logistics have experienced centuries of neglect that have made the Prisons at this time to be a moral equivalence of hell [4].

This state of the Nigerian prisons was equally exacerbated by the dominant military leadership that Nigeria had experienced since independence. The military in its 29 years of political leadership saw the prisons as a punitive institution and thus did not give it any attention as to develop its infrastructures and conditions. Ogundipe [4] noted that:

The military did periodically visit the prisons but only to make sure that those they had detained were not allowed any measure of ‘comfort’. The population of inmates under them became elastic in that the capacity of each prison did not matter; all detainees had to be held in custody that if the prisons became tortuous, it served the purpose of the military regime very well (p.29-30).

Most of the detainees were held in squalid and congested cells without adequate medical care, food supplies or water and often with no stores at all, thus leading to disease outbreak, environmental degradation and an increased mortality rate among inmates. The conditions of Prisons’ staff were not different. Their salary structure was one of the worst in Africa. Many people outside the system looked at them and regarded them as prisoners also. Most of the prison branches or sections around the country did not have a single official moving vehicle while the very few that had, found it difficult to maintain them due to poor revenue allocations. The institution had no befitting independent corporate headquarters prior to 1999. The Prisons system in Nigeria is one of the most underdeveloped institutions in the criminal justice sector. No new prison has been constructed in more than forty years and the prison population continues to grow [5].

The Prison Act of 1945 and accompanying regulations have not been reviewed in over 50 years. It is noteworthy that most of the prison inmates in custody who are primarily the cause of the overcrowding are not convicts but persons awaiting trial. A sampling of about 30 prisons across the country in 1998 revealed that in some of the prisons as much as 98% of the populations of those in prison custody were awaiting trial [6, 5].

The situation is not very much different today. The plight of juvenile offenders and female prisoners is much worse than already described. Most of these prisons were not built with females in mind; however, they do host female inmates. Cases of rape, pregnancies and extra-judicial killings abound in Nigerian Prisons. However, hope grew in 1999 when the country was returned to civilian rule with a promise to uphold fundamental human rights, the rule of law, pursue a nationwide decongestion of the prisons and the reformation of the prisons institution but, nothing have been done [7].

According to Olajide [8], total inmates population of about 53,100 is overcrowded with a population feast of children, under-aged, awaiting trial and sundry abandoned and untried inmates. The aims of the prison are defeated by the reality. Most of the nation’s prisons are far older than the nation, the facilities are not upgraded yet, the inmates sent there are far more in population than the facilities were designed to accommodate. Inmates are crammed; sanitary facilities are simply inhuman, diseases are freely shared and yet more inmates are daily brought in to compound the already bad situation.

These problems are not different with Abakalikli and Awka federal prisons. Abakalikli prison has the capacity to accommodate 387 inmates, but it is accommodating 846 inmates, which is 459 above its original carrying capacity. Awka prison has the capacity to accommodate 238 inmates, but it is accommodating 440 inmates, which is 202 above its original carrying capacity. As a result of this, inmates in Abakaliki and Awka prisons are not corrected or reformed properly because the correctional facilities available cannot serve all the inmates. Unfortunately, this is worsened by the strained relationship between most of the inmates and the staff in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons which affects the reformation and reintegration of the inmates. It is against this backdrop that this present study sets out to identify and address the welfare challenges confronting the Nigerian prison system.

Effects of non-availability of essential Correctional Facilities in the Nigerian Prisons Usman (2014) reported that inmates get back into society hardened after serving their sentences, thereby frustrating security operatives’ efforts to curb criminal acts in the society. The common ailments among inmates were malaria, high blood pressure and skin infections, which is rampant among inmates,
particularly those at the Medium Prisons. The most worrisome aspect is the congestion of these prisons owing to the increasing number of awaiting trial persons. According to Usman [9], the major factor militating against efforts by the Nigeria Prisons to efficiently carry out their constitutional responsibility is the issue of congestion owing to the increasing number of awaiting trial persons. The major challenge presently is that we have too much volume of awaiting trial inmates in majority of the prisons in Nigeria, especially the urban prisons and this has to do with the problem of Criminal Justice System. It is only when the population of awaiting trial inmates reduces that we will be able to properly carry out the rehabilitation and reformation work on inmates.

Oduyela [7] reported that Nigeria penal system is punitive, degrading and dehumanizing; and leaves the prisoners with the least opportunity of re-entry into the society. He went further to argue that those who are lucky to come out alive find it exceedingly difficult to re-adjust to normal lives and eventually end up in crime. Prison sources disclose that prison life has become somewhat cyclic for several ex-prisoners, the number of recidivists remain in the increase.

Ways to Improve the Welfare System of the Nigerian Prisons Chukwudi [10] conducted a study on challenges of reforms in the Nigerian prison system: Lessons from USA and South Africa and recommended some steps that should be taken to ensure effective prison reforms in Nigeria. First, there should be the political will to genuinely carry out reforms with human face, free from party inclinations and sentiments, favoritisms and nepotism. Second, viable prison reforms should be such that inmates coming out of incarceration will be useful to themselves, their families and the Nigerian nation at large. This can be achieved through the impartation of useful skill acquisition including carpentry, shoe making, fashion designing, painting, building, etc. It then means that the persons involved would have to be actively involved in the learning of basic skills while in prison.

The issue of human right violation is very important since the fundamentals of the rights and privileges of inmates have been supposedly violated with reckless abandon. Thus, prison inmates should be allowed adequate rights to proper basic education, adequate health care, good nutrition and skill acquisition. These strategies if properly implemented will no doubt propel viable prison system in Nigeria in the fourth Republic and beyond.

A survey research by Asokhia and Agbonlue [11] on assessment of rehabilitation services in Nigerian prisons in Edo state, with the sample of 147 inmates drawn from six Nigerian prisons, they recommended the following:

- Government should provide adequate rehabilitation services and facilities in prisons.
- Correctional education programmes should be implemented within and outside Nigerian prisons.
- Rehabilitation services should include: Awareness Programmes, Counseling Services, Information Communication Technology, Correctional Education and Skills Acquisition Programmes among others.
- Schools should be established within the prisons, quality prison educational programmes should be incorporated to improve the educational qualification of the prison inmates so as to secure jobs after discharge. Educational programme is another way to educate offenders so as to prevent recidivism. In the same vein, vocational programmes such as welding, auto-mechanics, photography, hair-dressing, cosmetology and printing should be implemented rather than training inmates toward traditional blue-collar employment.
- Finally, since the study revealed that prison inmates preferred one recreational activity to other rehabilitation services, there is urgent need by the federal government to provide more functional recreational facilities and services the Nigerian prison system.
- Achu, Owan and Ekok [3] conducted an ex-post-facto study on the Impact of prison reforms on the welfare of the inmates: A case study of Afokang prison, Calabar, Cross River state, Nigeria. They sampled 200 prison inmates using simple random sampling technique. They made the following recommendations:
  - Inmates should be realistically introduced to useful trades that are geared toward occupational reality of the world outside prison, so that they could better their lives on discharge from prison.
  - The federal government should take concrete steps to rehabilitate the cells, barracks and offices occupied by the prison staff and inmates.
  - Adequate and functional medical facilities should be provided to arrest the high rate of diseases and death incidence among the inmates.
There should be a body established by law and charged with visiting prisons with a view to identifying and proffering solutions to the immediate problems of the Nigerian prison system.

There should be law requiring the controller of prisons in various states to compile the names of convicted prisoners who have been of good behavior within a specific period for the purpose of granting them amnesty, so that congestion problem can be eased.

The government and related agencies should make sure that only persons who have been convicted for criminal offences by a competent court of law shall serve as their abode for the period.

Officers and men of Nigeria prison should be properly trained to best handle the nitty-gritty of prison issues.

Corrupt officials should be severely dealt with and probably dismissed if found wanting.

The court and the judges should also be serious and attend to cases with dispatch to avoid congestion and death.

Reforms should be backed with the needed political will to be implemented, because making reforms without implementation is a good as not making the reforms.

Theoretical Framework: Structural functionalism: the Talcott Parsons model is the framework for this study. Structural functionalism is an approach in Sociology which was developed at the wake of 19 century's industrial revolution. This theory was sociologically developed as an adequate tool for dealing with the interrelatedness of various traits, institutions, groups and so forth, within the social system. Structural functionalism is as old as the history of sociology. This is evident in the works of the founding fathers of the discipline like Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

The functional approach in Sociology was borrowed from the analogy of organism in the biological sciences in which it is known that all the body organs, in any living organism, have a kind of interconnectivity which links them together. Each of these organs plays a certain role for the survival of the organism. In any situation where any of the organs malfunctions, it is believed that this malfunctioning might affect the life of the organism. The functionalists, therefore, argue that the society is made up of groups and institutions which constitute the whole. They state further that each of these institutions that form the society plays a part for the survival of the system [12].

From the foregoing, therefore, functionalists view society as a system, a set of interconnected parts which, together, form a whole. This makes society the primary unit of functional analysis. The focus of attention is how the basic parts of the society, that is, the various institutions, such as the military, paramilitary like the prisons, religious organizations, family, political, economic, legal and educational institutions co-relate together and functions for the survival of the entire society.

The main interest of the functionalists is the question of order. That is, how social order would be achieved and sustained for the smooth running of the society. The functional approach to the study of society tends to be conservative in nature because it seems, to a large extent, is against the theory of social change. Functional ideology believes that there are basic needs of a society, which must be met, for social life to go on.

These basic needs or necessary conditions of existence are known as functional prerequisites of society. Functional prerequisites refer to the fulfillments of the broadest conditions which are necessary for a system's existence and which, therefore, prevent its termination. To the functionalist school of thought, what constitute the basic needs of society must be identified and met before a society can survive.

In the position of Talcott Parsons, every system has four functional imperatives. They are: adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration (I) and latency (L) or pattern maintenance. This is known as the AGIL scheme. Each of these imperatives has implications in this study.

Adaptation: The system must cope with the external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environments and adapt the environment to its needs. By implication, the ability of prisoners to survive in their external environments depends on their access to good accommodation, nutritious food, good clothes, good health services, good education and their ability to adapt to the pressures in their prison environment.

Goal Attainment: The system must define and achieve its primary goals. The political structures and systems established in the society, in which the prison system is
one part have the mandate of setting target goals for the society. These goals are geared towards the maintenance of descent life styles and the dignity of the prisoners after reforms. Government has the obligatory responsibility to make provision for the protection of prisoners’ welfare through the provision of basic facilities like sporting equipments, basic education, good and manageable accommodation, good food, good medical services and so forth. Thus, it is government’s responsibility to protect and provide for the dignity of life for the prisoners. However, it appears that government has failed to achieve these set goals. There is also government’s failure in the protection of the dignity of the prisoners. The prison system is, therefore prone to corrupt practices. Government’s failure, in this regard, affects prisoners in the fulfillment of the goal of rehabilitation and re-integration in the society on release.

Integration: The system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It must also manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (Adaptation, Goal attainment and Latency). Government’s failure to protect the fundamental human dignity and other set goals triggers off, among individuals, behavior which ran contrary to social order and social justice. This makes convicts to become hardened even after being released from prison. Some of them find it difficult to get integrated back into the society, hence recidivism is inevitable. Corruption among prison staff among others would be noticed. These are examples of anti-social behaviors. Given the fact that the regulatory system is weak and inefficient, it creates room for deviant behavior to be exhibited. Some prisoners may catch on this to escape for safety since their lives are at serious risk in prison. They do not eat good food, no medical services, environment is extremely dirty for human habitation, no beds or mattresses for the inmates to lie down and rest.

Latency (Pattern Maintenance): A system must furnish, maintain and renew the motivation of prison staff in order to phase away corruption in the system. Through education, social norms and values are inculcated into the prison inmates to give them a sense of belonging. The denial of basic welfare provisions for the prisoners would have far reaching influence on their livelihood on release, hence this theory. The welfare of both the prison inmate and prison staff are very fundamental. That the prisoners are not hardened, they need good welfare provisions like good food, good and habitable accommodation and an environment that is free from diseases contamination. This will make prison inmates to have sense of belongingness as citizens on Nigeria.

On the side of prison staff, their own welfare is paramount too. The way they are cared for will make them free from being tagged as prisoners too. Their monthly emoluments should be enough to help and provide basic welfare need like good accommodation and food for their household; meet their financial obligations in their families, religious groups and at community at large. This will make them face their services with all dedication and humility.

Design of the Study: Cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. This design was chosen for this study because it enabled the researchers to gather wide range of relevant data on the Nigerian prisons system. Questionnaire instrument was employed in data generation.

Area of Study: The study was carried out in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons. Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons were purposively chosen for this study. Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons were built in 1946 and 1904 respectively by the British colonial government in Nigeria to shelter crime suspects awaiting trial and convicted offenders for reform and rehabilitation. Abakaliki prison is located in Abakaliki, the capital city of Ebonyi state Nigeria. It shares boundary with Ebonyi State Police Command Headquarters in the North through West, Ministry of Works and Transport in the south and Federal Teaching Hospital 1 (FETHA. 1). Abakaliki prison is built to accommodate 387 inmates [13]. Awka prison is located in the capital city of Anambra state Nigeria. It shares boundary with Police Area Command and Awka South Local Government Headquarters in the North, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and State Police Headquarters in the East, while in the west is NIPCO Filling-Station. Awka prison is built with the capacity to accommodate 238 inmates [13].

Target Population: The population consisted of all the prison inmates and staff in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons. The total number of inmates and staff in Abakaliki prison were 846 for inmates and 178 for staff (Abakaliki prisons record, 18th March, 2014), whereas the total
number of inmates and staff in Awka prison were 442 for inmates and 134 for staff (Awka prisons record, 18th March, 2014). This brought the total population in Abakaliki and Awka federal prisons as at 18th March, 2014 to 1600. Please see table 3.3.1 for details.

Table 1: The Population Characteristics of Awka and Abakaliki Prisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Inmates and workers</th>
<th>Abakaliki</th>
<th>Awka</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awaiting trial inmates (ATI)</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>1128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicts</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff or Prison workers</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abakaliki and Awka prisons record, 18th March 2014.

Sample Size: The sample size for this study was three hundred and twenty (320). In determining the sample size, the researcher used Alien Taro Yamane [14] method of sample size determination. Yamane [14] provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes. This formula was used to calculate the sample size for this study and is shown below. A 95% confidence level and level of maximum variability (P = 0.05) were assumed. The formula for the sample size estimation is given as:

\[ n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \]

Where:
n = the sample size
N = the population size
e = the level of precision (allowable error) that is 5% or 0.05.

Therefore, the sample size estimation is given as:

\[ n = \frac{1600}{1 + 1600(0.05)^2} \]

n = 1600/1601 x 0.0025 =399. Therefore, the sample size is approximately 400.

Sampling Technique: Stratified sampling technique which is a probability sampling technique was adopted in this study. The population was stratified under different categories of inmates and workers. This particular technique was used because it gave each element of the population an equal chance of being included in the study.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis: Data for this study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include questionnaire administration to respondents and in-depth interviews. On the other hand, data were secondarily sourced through the library and other documents dealing with the prison system. In other to compliment data generation through questionnaire instrument, in-depth interviews were conducted on 4 prison staff and 4 prison inmate respectively.

Both qualitative and quantitative components of data collected for this study were analyzed. Qualitatively, responses from respondents, as were generated through interviews, were subjected to content analysis while the quantitative components of data generated were analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Inferring from the sample size, a total of 400 questionnaire were distributed. From this number, 307 were correctly filled and returned. This formed the basis for this analysis. The respondents were of two genders: males and females. The mean age was 32 - 78 years. From the total sample population, 32.1% of the respondents were SSCE/ WAEC holders, 23.1% respondents were OND/HND holders, 16.6% respondents were higher degree holders while 14.3% were holders of FSLC. Findings reveal that 75.3% were Christians, 12.7% were Muslims while 1.3% respondents did not indicate their religious affiliations. In their marital status, findings reveal that 53.4% respondents were single, 33.6% were married while 1.6% were widowed. The implication is that majority of the respondents were single.

Recreational Facilities Available in the Nigerian Prison System: Recreational activities are part of the welfare packages prison inmates need in other to survive and look healthy. We probed to discover whether recreational
facilities like football, table tennis, basketball, boxing and volleyball exist in the Nigerian prison system or not. Results generated are contained in table 3.

Table 3: Respondents view on the breakdown of recreational facilities existing in Abakaliki and Awka Prisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Exist</th>
<th>Does not exist</th>
<th>Do not know</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football facilities</td>
<td>253 (82.4%)</td>
<td>19 (6.2%)</td>
<td>35 (11.4%)</td>
<td>307 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table tennis</td>
<td>15 (4.9%)</td>
<td>199 (64.8%)</td>
<td>93 (30.3%)</td>
<td>307 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>17 (5.5%)</td>
<td>238 (77.6%)</td>
<td>52 (16.9%)</td>
<td>307 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>22 (7.2%)</td>
<td>221 (72.0%)</td>
<td>64 (20.8%)</td>
<td>307 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>14 (4.6%)</td>
<td>260 (84.7%)</td>
<td>33 (10.7%)</td>
<td>307 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field survey 2015

Results in table 3 indicate that 82.4% of participants confirmed that football facilities exist in prisons for the recreational activities of prison inmates. This is against the position of 6.2% who affirmed that the said facilities do not exist. On the other hand, 11.4% participants had no knowledge of the availability of football facilities. This implies that football facilities were installed for the recreational activities of prison inmates. The joy of this result is that the availability of football facilities will automatically enhance the welfare of prison inmates. Other facilities like table tennis were confirmed not to be in existence by 64% of the participants as against 30.3% participants who do not have any knowledge. Its only 4.9% who attested to the fact that table tennis was put in place.

Results further indicate that basket ball facility does not exist. This was the position of 77.6% participants as against 5.5% who said that it exist. Those who were neutral were 16.9%. For boxing facility, 72.0% respondents denied the existence of it in the prison system while 7.2% were on the contrary. Concerning volleyball facility, 84.7% certified that there was no volleyball facility in the prison system while 4.6% said there was. In the same regard, 10.7% said they had no knowledge of its existence. From all indications, data available reveal the fact that out of five (5) recreational facilities (football, table tennis, basketball, boxing and volleyball) sought for, its only one (football) that was confirmed to be in existence. The other four were not in existence in the prison system. This is a sorry state of the Nigerian prison system. It is a clear indication that the welfare of the prison inmate was in jeopardy. This confirms the words of Achu, Owan and Ekob (2013) that they found “Nigerian Prisons to be a dungeon which represents man’s inhumanity to man”.

Type of Diseases Prison Inmates Suffer in Abakaliki and Awka Prisons: In line with the health driven focus of this study, we sought to determine the types of diseases prison inmates suffer. Their responses from participants on this are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Participants view on types of diseases prison inmates suffer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ailment/ diseases</th>
<th>Population and per-cent age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>57 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td>261 (97.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin related diseases</td>
<td>255 (94.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Memory</td>
<td>48 (17.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>6 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Infections</td>
<td>44 (16.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other diseases</td>
<td>222 (82.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field survey 2015

Results in table 4 show that most of the inmates complained of malaria and skin related diseases. They are 97% and 93.8% respectively. This can be attributed to the much presence of mosquitoes and the general squalid conditions in which they live. Complaints about other diseases such as obesity (2.2%), high blood pressure (21.2%), toilet infections (16.4%) and loss of memory (17.8%) were few. Findings also reveal that other diseases such as cough and typhoid fever were reported to have affected the inmates. Out of the 307 respondents, 222 (82.5%) affirmed that they have suffered other diseases. Respondents were of the view that the treatments they receive for the diseases they suffer were inadequate. This was the opinion of 85.5% respondents. This raises questions on the quality of medical services provided in the prison system. As a result of the inadequate medical facilities, what we have is a collection of sick people, most of whom are not yet convicted, crammed and forgotten in overcrowded prisons. An inmate narrated this gruesome condition in ad IDI thus:

Nobody leaves this prison without skin disease. It is the most common disease in the prison. There is no water to bath most of the times and the congestion is also a problem (Male IDI Prison inmate).

The respondents were asked whether they have been to prison before, 58% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Among this set of respondents, 31% stated that the absence of adequate prison facilities influenced their recourse to crime. When asked about their thoughts on why there were cases of recidivism, a prison staff in an in-depth interview had this to say:
Let me tell you the truth, the prison is not performing its function. How can the idea of reformation be achieved without good vocational facilities and trainings. Some of these prisoners here have been released more than once but they still find their way back (Male IDI prison staff).

This Was Corroborated by an Inmate Thus:

Recidivism must occur since they don’t even give us proper training and skills. When you are released from prison and you find nothing doing, the easiest option will be crime (Male IDI Prison inmate).

In another IDI, a respondent stated differently:

Which training will make a born criminal not to indulge in criminal activities? Training such persons is a waste of time. Crime is so enshrined in their blood that they can never quit stealing (oshi di ha na obara). This means that stealing is in their blood (laughs) (Male IDI prison staff).

The absence of correctional facilities in the Awka and Abakaliki Prisons has led to conditions antithetical to the achievement of the correctional objectives. This grim picture was captured by Oduyela (2003) when he stated that “the Nigeria penal system is punitive, degrading and dehumanizing; and leaves the prisoners with the least opportunity of re-entry into the society. He went further to argue that those who were lucky to come out alive find it exceedingly difficult to re-adjust to normal lives and eventually end up in crime”.

CONCLUSION

The welfare challenges faced by Nigerian prisons are enormous. Recreational and medical facilities are lacking. In this light, the prisoners are denied recreational activities which should have helped to build their body systems strengthen their bones, muscles and make them very healthy. Coupled overpopulation of Nigerian prisons, the state of prison environment is not very pleasant at all. Their environments are not in a healthy state which encourages the spread of diseases like malaria (97.0%), skin related diseases (94.8%), high blood pressure (212.2%) and loss of memory (17.8%). This has fare reaching negative consequences on the lives of prisoners. Many of them fall sick as a result of polluted prison environment. This sometimes leads to death of prisoners as an epidemic spread is likely to deal with the health of inmates. This will have far negative consequences on the society especially when inmates are released into the society. They are likely to infest members of the society with sicknesses they are carrying from the prisons. This calls for a quick intervention to better the Nigerian prison system towards the realization of its goals and objectives.

Recommendations: Following the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- That government should provide recreational facilities for prison inmates. This could help in boosting their welfare provisions.
- That medical facility should be made available in the Nigerian prisons. This will ensure that prisoners who are sick receive medical treatment for a healthy living.

REFERENCES


