



## Welfare and Effect of Correctional Congestion amongst Inmates in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author NCO design the study, performed the data analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors OPA and KAA reviewed the first draft of the manuscript and helped with the revisions. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To examine the Welfare and effect of Correctional Congestion amongst Inmates in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

**Study Design:** Cross sectional survey design.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The study was carried out in selected states and location of correctional service in Niger Delta Region which include, Rivers and Akwa Ibom States between December 2017 and September 2018.

**Methodology:** Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting Three Hundred and Eighty-Seven (387) inmates using the Taro Yarmane Formular from the population of Eleven Thousand Six Hundred and Thirty-Five (11,635). Primary and Secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were obtained through the administration of questionnaire. The set of questionnaires was administered to inmates to elicit information on the facilities and comfortability of the prison and the welfare service available. The secondary source of information that was employed included relevant official publications and records from Nigerian Correctional Service,

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journal articles, periodicals and internet sources. Frequency percentage table were used in presenting information on Demographic Characteristics of respondents.

**Results:** The major findings of the study revealed that majority have acquired one skill or the other while being incarcerated. They also stated that the most available welfare services provided by the prison system is the library facilities, however they are non-functional. Furthermore, majority stated that they are being fed just once in a day and stated that the major recreational facility present is the football pitch and they indicated that majority of them have been involved in Mid-range Industrial Production training and a major rehabilitation process they have undergone is counselling. On the effect of correctional service Congestion on the Welfare of Inmates Data on the Major Impact of correctional service congestion on welfare of Inmates revealed that majority stated that correctional services congestion has led to death although the number cannot be determined. Majority stated that the untimely death has been one of the consequences of congestion in the prisons and one impact of congestion on their health is getting infection through the toilets.

**Conclusion:** It was concluded that Prisons congestion has led to death as it can be deduced that untimely death has been one of the consequences of congestion in the Correctional service.

*Keywords: Correctional facilities; welfare; inmates.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria over the years has made tremendous progress on political, economic and social reforms, but inspite of all these Nigeria's correctional service are least considered and are yet to make appreciable impact on the welfare of the inmates [1]. A recurring debate within contemporary academic circles of criminologists, social workers and prison experts is to institute an appropriate template for proper prison administration that will reflect its objectives.

Even though crime and other vices need to be deterred, it should be to the extent that its application is unreasonable to the inmates during and after imprisonment. It is therefore needful to be logical and rational in metting out punishment. According to some scholar's crime that produces pleasure must be counteracted by pain such as imprisonment, but this must be done reasonably and in line with standard prison practices which include the welfare of the imprisoned while in prison [2].

Correctional service inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise irregularly and many inmates provide their own food, only those with money or whose relatives provide food regularly had sufficient food. Petty corruption among prison officials makes it difficult for money provided for food to reach the prisoners and poor inmates often relied on hand-out from others to survive. These unwholesome treatments have contributed to the death of numerous prisoners [3].

There is more to imprisonment than opening and closing of prison gate to throw in convicts.

Modern penal management techniques emphasized not only reformation and rehabilitation of the inmates but also the application of the term correction, to reflect inmates or convicts change in attitude and the decongestion of prisons.

The current attitude in penal circles is to see improvement from the perspective of reform and rehabilitation rather than from the perspective of punishment. It is assumed that those who have committed crimes need help and should be assisted to lead a good life. This view according to scholars is predicated upon the understanding that those who have fallen foul of the collective norms and laws of the society expressed in criminal laws should be reformed; that is why the term correction is applied to reflect this thinking [4].

Moreso, is the fact that out of 240 prisons in the country, four out of five of them were built before 1950, and as such did not take into cognizance the number of inmates currently being housed in the prisons which is against the welfare of the inmates [5]. The aged long buildings are decrepit therefore rubs the inmates its true ambiance needed for their physical and mental wellbeing. Educational and vocational training programmes, even when they exist, lack necessary materials and are limited to "handful" of inmates. This explains why there is high rate of recidivism, because there is no proper environment for them to be rehabilitated [6].

Incontrovertibly the welfare administration of inmates in the Nigeria's prisons is very outdated. For example, each day prison directors register inmates' names on a blackboard positioned near

the prison gate and report to the Zonal office who in turn report to the headquarters in Abuja but more worrisome is that nothing is done by successive governments as regards their accommodations and rehabilitative imperatives [7].

In Nigeria several studies have attested to the neglect of the Correctional service in attaining the purpose of its establishment as stated in the law, instead the prison system is accused of hardening inmates, subjecting them to horrible and degrading conditions giving punishment exceeding the crimes committed; rendering inmates emotionally and psychologically disorganized in an uncaring environment [8].

From the above studies, it is obvious that Nigerian Correctional Service is no more concerned with the reform and the rehabilitation process of inmates rather this had yielded more or less high rate of recidivism. Looking at the aforementioned studies no study has investigated the nexus between Correctional Service congestion and inmate's welfare in selected states in south-south Nigeria.

According to Fred [9] overcrowded Correctional service facilities inexorably lead to inmates being exposed to improper health conditions that result in the spread of epidemic diseases likely to cause death such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDs. Based on these identified problems, the focus of this present study is on assessing Correctional service congestion and the welfare of inmates in selected States in the Niger Delta Region [10].

The specific objectives assessed the extent of welfare service in the selected states and evaluated the effect of correctional service congestion on welfare inmates.

- I. Assess the extent of welfare service provided by the correctional service in the selected States;
- II. Evaluate the effect of Correctional service congestion on welfare of Inmates.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Several scholars defined a sample as a subset of the target population used for a study. Sample is seen as a portion of the population to be studied

that is carefully selected to represent all the characteristic traits of the larger population from which data on the issues of interest are being collected so as to make valid generalized statements about the population [11,12]

Therefore, to determine the sample size for this study, Purposive sampling was used to select three States from six states in the Niger Delta region. The rationale behind the use of purposive sampling was as a result of in-depth interviews carried out by the researcher which indicated that Prisons found in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states are found to be experiencing high level of congestion based on available secondary data from the [13]. To determine the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamane formula [13] which stated is a simplified form of the formula developed by the National Education Association was applied. The formula is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(a)^2}$$

Where,

n = sample size

N = population

a = level of significance, which is 0.05

$$n = \frac{11,635}{1 + 11,635 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 387$$

From the equation above, a total of 387 of the inmates were selected as the sample for the study. This is as shown in Table 1.

### 2.2 Sources of Data

Data for this study were from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained from the field specifically from structured questionnaire that was administered to the inmates. The questionnaire was designed to capture information from the inmates on the issues of interest to this study. Secondary data sources entails information from gazette newspapers and other published sources.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data for the study were collected with the aid of a questionnaire which was administered to the respondents to ascertain their views on the research aim. The questionnaire has two

**Table 1. Correctional service population and sample size**

State	Names of correctional service	Number of inmates	Questionnaire distribution to the total sample size
Rivers	Port Harcourt	4402	146
	Degema	1256	42
	Elele	798	27
	Ahoada	543	18
Bayelsa	Okaka	2280	76
Akwa Ibom	Abak	387	13
	Eket	342	11
	Ikot Abasi	627	21
	IkotEkpene	1000	33
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,635</b>	<b>387</b>

Source: Present study

sections; section A which elicited information on socio demographics of the respondents and section B elicited information in line with the objectives of the study. Copies of the questionnaire were given to the inmates through simple random sampling technique where the official calls the inmates to their hall and the researcher and assistants administered the questionnaire in no particular order, thereafter the questionnaire were retrieved from the inmates.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Research Question 1

What type of welfare services are being provided for Correctional Service inmates?

On the involvement of inmates in the prison skills acquisition scheme, Table 2 shows that 102 inmates that represent 26.4% of the study population agreed that they are involved in prison skill acquisition programme, 195 inmates representing 50.4% of the study population also strongly agreed that they are involved in skill acquisition program in the correctional service, 43 inmates representing 11.1% of the study population disagreed and 47 inmates representing 12.1% of the study population strongly disagreed on their involvement in any form of skill acquisition in the prison.

Table 3 shows the available welfare services provided in the prisons by the correctional service authorities, as observed 52(13.4%) inmates have identified that recreational service as a welfare service was provided by the authorities, 271 inmates representing 70% of the study population identified library facilities, 21 inmates representing 5.4% of the study population identified schools as a welfare service

provided in the prisons and 43 representing 11.1% of the study population inmates agreed that apart from the ones mentioned that other welfare services were provides for inmates in the Correctional Service.

Table 4 shows that 71 inmates that represent 18.3% of the study population agreed that the welfare services in the prisons are functional, 53 inmates representing 13.7% of the study population also strongly agreed that the welfare services in the prisons are functional, 179 inmates representing 46.3% of the study population disagreed and 56 inmates representing 14.7% of the study population strongly disagreed that the welfare services in the prisons are functional.

Table 5 shows the number of times the inmate in the correctional service were fed daily, observation from the table shows that 367 inmates representing 94.8% of the study population agreed that they are fed once daily, 20inmates representing 5.2% of the study population said they are fed twice a day.

Table 6 shows the recreational facilities available in the correctional services, 300 inmates representing 77.5% of the study population agreed that football facilities is one recreational facility available to inmates in the prisons. 76 inmates representing 19.6% of the study population agreed that table tennis ball facilities is one recreational facility available to inmates in the prisons, in the case of basketball only 3 inmates who represent 0.8% of the study population agreed to the availability of basketball recreational facilities, for boxing there was no response meaning a total absence in all the prisons investigated while volley ball record 8 inmates representing 2.1% of the study population who agreed to the availability of volley

ball recreational facilities in the correctional services.

Table 7 shows the nature of training undergone by inmates in the prisons from the table, it is observed that 378 inmates representing 98% of the study population have been involved in mid-range industrial production training in the prisons while 9 inmates who represent 2% of the total study population have taken to trainings on agricultural productions.

Table 8 shows the rehabilitation process and undergone by the prison inmates, it shows that 327 inmates representing 84% of the study population have undergone counseling as a rehabilitation process in the prisons while 60 inmates representing 16% of the study population consented that they have been involved in adult and remedial education.

### 3.2 Research Question 2

How does prison congestion affect the welfare of inmates?

Table 9 shows the inmates response to the statement that prison congestion have led to death of inmates, from the table it is observed that 192 inmates representing 49.6% of the study population agreed that prison congestion have led to death of inmates, this was strongly agreed to by 107 inmates who represent 27.6% of the population, although this was disagreed by 23 inmates and strongly disagreed by 65 inmates representing 6.0% and 16.8% respectively.

Table 10 shows the number of deaths witnessed by inmates in the prison, from the table 7 inmates representing 1.8% of the study population asserted that they had not witnessed any death, 72 inmates representing 18.6% of the study population agreed that they had witnessed between 1-5 deaths in the prison, 41 inmates representing 10.6% of the study population agreed that they had witnessed 6-10 deaths, 92 inmates representing 23.8% of the study population as well agreed that they had witnessed 11-15 death while 175 inmates representing 45.2% of the study population agreed that they had witnessed more than 15 deaths in the Correctional service.

Table 11 shows the consequences of congestions in the correctional services as observed from the table 256 inmates representing 66.1% of the study population agreed that untimely death of inmates is a consequence of congestion in the correctional services, 45 inmates representing 11.6% of the study population agreed that it brings about negative impacts on the health of the inmates, 30 inmates representing 7.8% of the study population agreed that it brings about exposure of inmates to environmental hazard such as bad air and 56 inmates representing 14.5% of the study population consented to sexual abuse among inmates through the practice of homosexual lesbian activities.

Table 12 shows the impact of congestion in inmate's health as observed 98 inmates

**Table 2. Involvement of inmates in prison skill acquisition scheme**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	102	26.4
Strongly Agree	195	50.4
Disagree	43	11.1
Strongly Disagree	47	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 3. Available welfare services provided by the correctional service AUTHORITY**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Recreational Services	52	13.4
Library Facilities	271	70.0
Schools	21	5.4
Medicals	15	3.9
Others	28	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 4. Status of welfare services provided by the prisons**

Prisons	Welfare Services	Status		
		Functional	Non Functional	Partially Functional
<b>Port Harcourt</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School		✓	
	Medicals		✓	
<b>Degema</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library		✓	
	School		✓	
	Medicals		✓	
<b>Elele</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School		✓	
	Medicals		✓	
<b>Ahoada</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School		✓	
	Medicals		✓	
<b>Okaka</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School		✓	
	Medicals	✓		
<b>Abak</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School		✓	
	Medicals		✓	
<b>Eket</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library		✓	
	School		✓	
	Medicals			✓
<b>Ikot Abasi</b>	Recreation	✓		
	Library			✓
	School	✓		
	Medicals			✓
<b>Ikot Ekpene</b>	Recreation		✓	
	Library		✓	
	School	✓		
	Medicals		✓	

Source: Present study

representing 25.3% agreed that high blood pressure is one health impact of congestion on inmates, 67 inmates representing 17.3% of the study population agreed that malaria is one health impact of congestion on inmates health, 109 inmates representing 28.2% of the study population agreed that skin related disease is

also one impact of congestion on health inmates, 33 inmates representing 8.5% of the study population agreed that loss of memory is as a result of congestion, 56 inmates representing 14.5% of the study population agreed that toilet infection is also another consequence of congestion on the health of inmates and 24

inmates representing 6.2% also stated that other effects exist due to congestion of inmates correctional ward.

disagreed while 51 inmates representing 13.2% of the study population strongly disagreed that a relationship exist between prison congestion and inmates welfare.

On relationship between Correctional service and inmates welfare as observed on Table 13 shows that 223 inmates representing 57.6% of the study population agreed that a relationship exist between prison congestion and inmates welfare, 64 inmates representing 16.5% of the study population strongly agreed, 49 inmates representing 12.7% of the study population

The rating of the level of correctional service congestion as shown on Table 14 shows that 356 inmates representing 92% of the study population identified that the level of congestion is high while 31 inmates representing 8% of the study population stated that the level of congestion in the correctional service is fair.

**Table 5. Number of times of daily feeding of inmates in the correctional services**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Once a day	367	94.8
Twice a day	20	5.2
Three time a day	-	-
None	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: [14]

**Table 6. Recreational Facilities available in the correctional service**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Football Facilities	300	77.5
Table tennis	76	19.6
Basketball	3	0.8
Boxing	-	-
Volleyball	8	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 7. Nature of the training undergone by Inmates**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Mid-range Industrial Production training	378	98
Training on agricultural Production	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 8. Rehabilitation Process Undergone by Inmates**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Counseling	327	84
Adult and remedial Education	60	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 9. Prison Congestion has led to Death of Inmates**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	192	49.6
Strongly Agree	107	27.6
Disagree	23	6.0
Strongly Disagree	65	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

**Table 10. Number of deaths witnessed by Inmates**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
None	7	1.8
1-5	72	18.6
6-10	41	10.6
11-15	92	23.8
15 and above	175	45.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Present study*

**Table 11. Consequences of congestion in the correctional services**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Untimely death of inmates	256	66.1
Negative impact on the health of the inmates	45	11.6
Expose inmates to Environmental Hazard such as bad air	30	7.8
Sexual abuse among inmates through the practice of homosexual lesbian activities	56	14.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Present study*

Table 15 shows that 269 inmates representing 69.5% of the study population agreed that prison congestion is a factor militating against inmates welfare, 102 inmates representing 26.4% of the study population strongly agreed, 7 inmates representing 1.8% of the study population disagreed while 9 inmates representing 2.3% of the study population strongly disagreed that prison congestion is a factor militating against inmates welfare.

**Table 12. Impact of congestion on inmates health**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High blood pressure	98	25.3
Malaria	67	17.3
Skin related disease	109	28.2
Loss of memory	33	8.5
Toilet Infection	56	14.5
Others	24	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Present study*

**Table 13. Relationship between correctional service congestion and inmate's welfare**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	223	57.6
Strongly Agree	64	16.5
Disagree	49	12.7
Strongly Disagree	51	13.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Present study*

**Table 14. Rating of the level of Correctional service Congestion**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	356	92
Low	-	-
Moderate	-	-
Fair	31	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Present study*



**Table 15. Correctional service Congestion is a Factor Militating Against Inmates' Welfare**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agree	269	69.5
Strongly Agree	102	26.4
Disagree	7	1.8
Strongly Disagree	9	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Present study

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Type of Welfare Services Provided by the Prisons

Sad to say that in 2016 the Nigeria correctional service budget amount proposed for the welfare of inmates was slashed from 10.6 billion Naira to 5.2 billion Naira amounting to 222 Naira 30 kobo for the feeding of an inmate per day. In a world where the standard is to aspire for three square meals, what happens in a situation where 222-naira 30 kobo cannot even guarantee a square meal thus this correlates with the findings of the research which reveals the poor state of the welfare services being rendered by the Nigerian Correctional service to inmate. This cannot guarantee the reformatory process of the inmates.

The Nigerian Correctional services are public institutions established by government for the rehabilitation and reformation of any person who are at breach of the law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Key essential service the Nigeria prison system is expected to provide for inmates are:

- Vocational Aptitude training of the Prisoners.
- Sporting Activities.
- Psychological evaluation.
- Provision of essential services like library, health care etc.
- However, result of data analysis shows that this service is inefficiently provided.

### 4.2 How Congestion Affect the Welfare of Inmates

Majority of the respondents had the opinion that one of the major consequences of congestion in the prisons was untimely death. It will be noted that the issue of congestion has had a negative health impact on many of the inmate thus leading to their untimely death.

Furthermore, data revealed an existing relationship between prisons congestion and inmate welfare as respondents indicate that the level of congestion in prisons across the Niger Delta is high and congestion is one of the factors militating against inmate welfare.

Wale in his study associated cell congestion as the absence of beds and bedding for prisoners. In the course of the research it was gathered that across the prisons today, very few prisons have beds and where they exist, they are grossly inadequate for the increasing population. But, while most of those that are incarcerated have to stand or sit all day, some privileged inmates enjoy the luxury of bed and bedding. Apart from keeping too many people in close proximity, the poor condition of the correctional service increases health risk. Most detainees take ill easily and because those who take ill almost always never receive treatment, diseases spread fast.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Analysis from the tables as seen clearly states that majority of the Inmates are awaiting trials and have acquired one skill or the other while being incarcerated. Lastly it was concluded that Prisons congestion has led to death as it can be deduced that untimely death has been one of the consequences of congestion in the Correctional service.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends based on findings that:

- That various recommendation generated from the various reforms committees which has been set up by previous government should be examined and implemented so as to bring about a drastic improvement on the condition of the correctional services in the Niger Delta.
- Skill acquisition and capacity development programmes should be enhanced so as to

make the beneficiaries equipped after being released from the prison.

## CONSENT

Also, informed and written consent was obtained from each respondent. All the participants were informed that the study is voluntary and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Also participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained during and after data collection and that information given will be used for research purposes only. And lastly articles and authors used were sighted accordingly in this research.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

Approval for this study was obtained from the Department Sociology, University of Port Harcourt Choba.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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