NIGERIAN PRISON SERVICE (NPS) AND THE CHALLENGES OF
SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION: A STUDY OF ABAKALIKI
PRISON

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Abstract

This paper examines the “Nigerian Prison Service (NPS) and the challenges of social welfare administration: A study of Abakaliki prison, aimed at ascertaining the extent to which welfare services were being administered in Abakaliki prison and the factors affecting it. Survey design through structured questionnaire was used to extract relevant data for the study. Hypothesis was tested using chi-square ($X^2$) statistical tool. The study discovered that Abakaliki prison has been unable to meet minimum U.N standard in welfare services because of congestion. There is a continuous use of bucket latrines which expose inmates to health hazards. Apart from inadequate funds, it was discovered that mismanagement of welfare funds has exposed inmates to unhealthy situation, which can result to epidemics and untimely deaths of the inmates. We therefore recommended that government should build more structures in the prison to accommodate the ever increasing number of inmates, states governments should be allowed to create state detention centres as alternative to prisons, constant training and retraining of prison staff in line with current global best practices for prisons becomes necessary.

Keywords: Prison, Social Welfare, Challenges, Administration.

INTRODUCTION

A prison or jail according to Wikipedia (2014) is a facility in which individuals are forcibly confined and denied a variety of freedoms under the authority of the state as a form of punishment. The most common use of prison is as part of a criminal justice system, in which
individuals officially charged with or convicted of crimes are confined to jail until they are either brought to trial to determine their guilt or complete the period of incarceration they were sentenced to after being found guilty at their trial. A prison is an institution designed to securely house people who have been convicted or are on awaiting trial.

These individuals known as prisoners or inmates are kept in continuous custody on a short or long term basis. Individuals who commit heinous crimes are sent to prison for more years. The more serious the offence, the longer the prison term imposed, (Ayo, 2008).

Historically, imprisonment as a type of punishment for crime had been determined by economic and political relationship, rather than by the public police. In early English and German law, a system of adjusting wrongs and injuries existed whereby, the offender was able to buy off the vengeance against him and his kin by compensation, fines, mutilation, banishment, enslavement and death and so, long term imprisonment was virtually unknown until modern times.

Imprisonment as a form of punishment of offenders was known in different ways to many pre-colonial communities in Africa (Aboki, 2007). In Nigeria for instance, there were traditional institutions that served as prisons before British rule, like the Ewedo of Edo group and Ogboni of Yoruba, and many others in the pre-colonial Nigeria (Aboki, 2007).

The origin of modern prison in Nigeria dates back to 1861 when Lagos was made the crown colony by the British colonialists. The noble goal of the prison services is the reform of those who pass through the prison gates and to protect the society from convicted felons. Many prisons have been established before and after independence in Nigeria. The prison has the duty to keep in safe custody persons legally sentenced to jail and identify the causes of their inherent anti-social behaviour and treat and reform them to become law-abiding citizens. The prison has also the responsibility to train inmates in trades that will make them useful to themselves and the society.

The decree 9 of 1972 prison act stipulated the importance of welfare division to the prisoners, as it was to see to inmates’ treatment, training and rehabilitation. It also oversees the medical needs of the prisons in addition to liaising between the prison and voluntary and humanitarian organizations that assist in the treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners.

The division also sees to the maintenance of proper environment in the prisons through the environmental health section by fumigation of cells, provision of portable water, maintenance of sewage, systems and general environmental orderliness. These are complemented by skills acquisition programmes in various vocations like carpentry, tailoring, painting, building and so on, in the course of serving their terms of imprisonment.

Welfare services or social welfare administration according to encyclopedia (2004) is seen as programmes that help people with basic needs, health, behaviour and family problem and efforts at career development and self employment. Simply put, they are the services that are rendered to vulnerable groups like prisoners that are socially, economically, physically or mentally handicapped.

Over the years, the provision of welfare services to inmates in Nigerian prisons have been far from satisfactory, many prisons do not meet up to the standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners while others violate the right to minimum feeding, allocation, accommodation, privacy, adequate lighting, medical services and the likes as stipulated by rule thirty one (31) of the minimum standards of prison. (Agozino, 2001).
Chukwumerije (2012) lamented that the problems of welfare services in Nigerian prisons are not far from that of non-explicit statement on rehabilitation, non-reformation, inadequate funding, inadequate structure and the likes. To this end, the extent to which social welfare services are provided in Abakaliki prison need to be investigated.

Statement of the Problem

There is a growing concern among Nigerian public that prisons are fast loosing its value to the fact that the condition of most administration of welfare services in Nigerian prisons especially among inmates in Abakaliki prison are far from standard and therefore unfavourable for the realization of the purposes for which prisons are established. These inadequacies in the administration of welfare services in prisons especially Abakaliki was the major problem of this research.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to examine the challenges of administration of welfare services in Abakaliki prisons and ways of improving on the welfare services.

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was tested in the course of the research;

HA1: Welfare services provision to Abakaliki prison have been far below the approved minimum UN standard over the years.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PRISON: Oxford dictionaries (1995) simply define prison as a building to which people are legally committed as a punishment for a crime or while awaiting trial. Implicit in the definition is the legality or lawfulness of prison. That is why globally, government make provision for rehabilitation centre where those who violate the laws of the land will be kept for sometime or for life and given corrective measures to enable them become better citizens.

Aboki (2007) said that in the triangular relationship of criminal justice system, the third leg carries the prison. To him, prison is responsible for the custody of the final product in the criminal justice process through maintenance of custody by carrying out measures to prevent escape including erecting high walls or chain link, fence, placing guards, constant checks on cell perimeter walls, surveillance from time to time. One can say that a prison is not expected to be exactly a bed of roses as the inmates are there for penal purposes. But neither is it also supposed to be a bed of thorns and thistles meant to stuff life out of the occupants. Infact, prisons are ideally reformative institutions (Suleman, 2011).

For Omagbemi and Odunewu (2008), prisons are established confinement for the safe keeping of those legally interned for awaiting trials. He maintained that except for those who are to be executed upon the pronouncement of death penalty on them, prisons are expected to transform and reform the interned towards the re-integration of the affected individuals into the larger society on completion of their terms. It therefore follows from their explanation that for prisons to achieve the objectives of reformation and rehabilitation, there is the need for training and retraining of inmates including exposing them to adequate and timely information. Thus, prisons apart from serving as a custodian for convicted people, doubles as a reformation and rehabilitations centres. But once an individual is confined in a correctional institution, he/she loses his/her freedom (Okwor, 2010).
A prison is a correctional institution where offenders or crime committers or those awaiting trials, are securely housed and given some sort of training while in confinement to prepare them for re-integration into the larger society on release.

**Nigerian Prisons Administration**

Administration whether public or private refers to performance of functions through a collective efforts. This means that administration exists whenever people cooperate to achieve a given target (Ezeali and Edeh, 2007).

The Nigerian Prison Service (NPS) operation under prison Act (1990) CAP 366, laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria section 15 and 16 of the act provide for regulation to achieve its goal (Aboki 2007). These divisions are technical, inspectorate and welfare units. The idea was that in consonance with the stipulation of decree no 9 of 1972, there was need to introduce specialized units to take specific areas of the prison services. While technical division takes charge of general administration, the inspectorate sees to staff recruitment, deployment, training, discipline, promotion, punishment and dismissal. The welfare division carters for inmates’ treatment, training and rehabilitation.

All prison in Nigeria is managed by the Nigerian prisons services (NPS), a parastatal under the Ministry of interior, headed by a comptroller of prisons. The Nigerian prison had been generally administered under one director, but now, it has in addition to the director three principal agencies or divisions performing different roles to enable the prisons executed its programmes expeditiously. There has been massive transformation in the service since 1972. From three directorates in 1980 to six in 1993. There was the 1986 re-organization of prisons consequent upon the creation of the customs, immigration and prison (NPS annual report, 2009).

Nweze (2012) wrote on the vision and mission of Nigerian Prison Service (NPS) as follows:

The vision is the evolution and sustenance of safe and secure Nigeria society where individuals, families and group will be free to pursue their legitimate interests with full assurance of their safety and security at all times.

The mission is to protection of the public by ensuing that persons committed to prisons by courts are held in safe and healthy conditions with their fundamental rights respected except for those rights removed by the fact of their imprisonment.

Nigerian prison Services (NPS) (2009) outlined the following as the functions of prisons:

i. Taking into lawful custody those certified to be so kept by courts of competent jurisdiction.

ii. Producing suspects in courts as and when due.

iii. Identifying the causes of their anti-social behaviour

iv. Setting in motion, mechanisms for their treatment and training for eventual reintegration into the society as normal and law abiding citizens on discharge.

v. Administering prison farms and industries for this purpose and in the process generate revenue for government.

**Nigerian Prison Service, Abakaliki, History and Organizational Structure**

Abakaliki prison situated behind state Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D), opposite Government House, Abakaliki was built in 1916 to receive all classes of prisoners. The first six prisoners of the prison were the people who refused to work. However, between 1936 –
1939, the number increased from 50 to 100 and they were serving sentences not more than one year (Ibeabuchi, 2008).

Reports from the field work conducted in the course of this work in 2014, show that Abakaliki prison has actual capacity of 381 inmates, but at present its inmates content is over 700 with only two structures added; one for staff, the other for inmates.

The Abakaliki prisons have the organizational structural arrangement and command of office thus:
(a) Controller (b) Deputy Controller (c) superintendent
(d) Assistant superintendent (e) welfare office (f) a senior medical officer (g) work manager (h) transport manager and few other officer (NPS, 2009).

**United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**

The original ideas for universal standards related to the treatment of prisoners was conceived by the international penal and penitentiary commission which prepared a set of rules endorsed by the league of nations in 1934, the commission was dissolved in 1951 when the United Nations assumed leadership (Agozino, 2001).

Before transforming its responsibilities to the United Nations, however, the commission revised the text of the rules, for submission to the first united nations congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders in Genem 1955 (Agozino, 2001). The congress unanimously adopted the new rules on 30th August, and recommended their approval by the economic and social council.

The council approved the standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners (resolution 633 cL (xxiv) of 31 July, 1957) as adopted by the first congress. The rules set out what is accepted to be good principle and practice in the treatment of prisoners as follows:

- There shall be no discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- There shall be a registration book with numbered pages for received prisoners and all information concerning the identity, reason for his commitment, hour of admission and release.
- Prisoners shall be separated according to sex, age criminal record, legal reason for detention and the necessities of their treatment.
- Prisoners shall be provided with good accommodation for their sleeping and the sanitary installations to enable every prisoner to comply with the need of nature when necessary in a decent manner.
- Every prisoner shall be provided at usual hours with food of nutritional values.
- Drinking water shall be all available to every prisoner whenever he/she needs it.
- There shall be adequate medical services for the prisoners’ mental and physical health.
- On clothing and bedding; every prisoner who is not allowed to wear his own clothing, shall be provided with an outfit of clothing suitable for the climate, not in a degrading or humiliating manner.

**Problems Of Nigeria Prison Service**

Suleman (2011) identified the following as the problems of Nigeria Prison Service (NPS):
• Acute shortage of drugs, ambulances in prison clinics leading to high incidence of epidemics, high mortality rates among prisoners.
• Acute shortage of staff resulting from retirement, dismissals, resignations, death.
• Abandonment of capital project leading to prison congestion.
• Inadequate funding for the maintenance of existing infrastructures.
• Inadequate office accommodation for staff
• Lack of vehicles to convey staff and prisoners to areas of need.
• Lack of promotion to eligible staff with the resultant law morale, frustrations and by extension, low productivity.

Similarly, Ibeabuchi (2008) identified the factors affecting social welfare services/administration in Nigeria prisons to include:
Overcrowding/congestion: for instance, Abakaliki prison with actual capacity of 389 now has 785 inmates; Professional rivalry leading to avoidable fights; Inadequate fund to carter for the inmates; Politicization of prison welfare programmes/packages; Lack of clear objectives; Lack of discipline among inmates and staff; Frequent jail breaks leading to security threats.

Theoretical Framework
For the purpose of this work, we adopted the humanitarian theory of punishment as propounded by Ayatollah (1970). According to this theory, punishment should be therapeutic, that is, to punish a man because he deserves it, and as much as he deserve is mere revenge, and therefore, barbarous and immoral. It is maintained that the only motive for punishing is to mend the criminal and the need to deter others by example. The doctrine accepts the view that all crime is more or less pathological and criminal needs to be healed and cured.

The relevance of the theory to this study is predicated on the fact that any meaningful improvement of the prisons welfare services, will be based on this philosophy and assumptions that a prison is a rehabilitation centre and not a dungeon. Prisoners are not those condemned to death rather, they are supposed to be seen as citizens who need corrective measures which require them to be separated from the larger community.

METHODOLOGY
This study made use of descriptive survey design by administering research questionnaire to the selected respondents drawn from the staff and inmates of Abakaliki prison. The researchers combined simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques.

The choice of simple random sampling was to ensure that every member of the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected in the sample studied while the stratified sampling allow the researchers to categorize and classified data in their respective groups.

Simple statistical tools like tables, frequency distribution and percentages were used in analysis of data while the hypothesis was tested by the use of chi-square ($X^2$) statistical tool. That is; $X^2 = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$

Where; $X^2$ = chi-square, $O$=observed frequency and $E$ = Expected frequency.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS
Table 1: Abakaliki prison
Actual capacity 381
Current capacity 750
Source: Field survey, 2014

Table 2: Abakaliki prison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject matter</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awaiting trial</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>92.47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>694</td>
<td>92.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convicts</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>750</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the above, 675 representing 92.47% of male inmates in Abakaliki prisons are awaiting trial while 55 representing 7.53% of male inmates are convicts. Also 19 representing 95% of female inmates are awaiting trial while only one female inmate representing 5%, is a convict.

Altogether, 694 inmates representing 92.53% are males in Abakaliki prison while 56 representing 7.47% are females. This shows that males commit more crimes than females. There are 750 inmates in Abakaliki prison as at the time of carrying out the investigation.

Test Of Hypothesis

The hypothesis that was tested states that: welfare services provision in Abakaliki prison have been far below the approved minimum UN standard. 98 respondents from the total population were sampled at 10% level of significance and 90% level of confidence.

The decision rule was that if the calculated chi-square \(X^2\) value is greater than the critical value that is, the degree of freedom at 3, the null hypothesis shall be rejected while alternate hypothesis accepted.

Contingency Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work, 2014

Chi-square calculation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O-e</th>
<th>((O-e)^2)</th>
<th>((O-e)^2/e)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>1122.25</td>
<td>45.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>-19.5</td>
<td>-380.25</td>
<td>-15.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>-14.5</td>
<td>-210.25</td>
<td>-8.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>21.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field work, 2014

The degree of freedom at 3 = 7.81

Chi – square value = 21.78

Conclusion

The alternate hypothesis which states that welfare services provision in Abakaliki prison are far below the minimum UN standard is true and therefore accepted.
Findings

Our field survey revealed that only 56 inmates of the 750 have been tried and convicted. The offence allegedly committed ranged from rape, stealing, robbery, communal clashes and few murder cases. Some of the awaiting trial inmates have spent not less than 5-7 years in prison not tried. This development has resulted to congestion in the prison with the rarely provided social services not reaching all of them.

We also discovered that there is a continued use of bucket latrines which constitute serious health hazards with little/or functional medical facilities on ground.

There is delay in determination of convicts’ appeals leading to convicts spending a substantial part of their term of sentence before the determination of their appeal. These people are never being exposed to any kind of skill or training, making them perpetually handicapped even after their release.

Findings also revealed that most funds and welfare packages meant for the inmates are more often than not hijacked by the officials. The structures in the prison are inadequate with most of them dilapidated. The inmates are malnourished and no bedding spaces for most of them.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing findings, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. Government should as a matter of urgency, build more houses to accommodate the ever increasing number of inmates in Abakaliki prison.
2. The Nigeria prison service should solicit for direct fund from donor agencies to relief them of their quagmire.
3. Capacity building- Training of top and senior management staff on international standards and reform strategy should be regularly carried out.
4. Regular seminars, organizational research workshop should be carried out to acquaint the staff and inmates with the necessary skills.
5. Churches should be encouraged the regularly give relief materials to prison inmates.
6. Education of inmates through award of scholarships to deserving ones should be taken paramount.
7. Inmates should be exposed to various agricultural practices to boost food production.
8. Quick determination of cases should not be treated banally.
9. Nigeria government should allow state government intervention by creating state detention centres as alternative to prisons.
10. Reformation of criminal justice system that will entail faster judicial procedure, decentralizing the prison system from exclusive to concurrent legislative list, deterrence and encouraging societal positive mind set to ex-convicts.
References


