

Roles of Community Education in Non-Governmental Organisations' Rehabilitation Programmes for Ex-Inmates against Recidivism in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

Recidivism is a significant challenge in Nigeria, with an estimated 60% of ex-inmates reoffending within two years of release. This study examines the effectiveness of community education as a follow-up programme of NGOs in the rehabilitation of ex-inmates against recidivism in Nigeria. The study found that community education programmes can significantly reduce recidivism rates by promoting social change, empowering ex-inmates, and providing education and training. However, the study also identified challenges affecting the implementation of community education programmes, including limited funding, lack of infrastructure, and corruption. The study, therefore, recommends among others increasing funding of these NGOs, improving infrastructure and reducing corruption will effectively provide expected outcomes.

Keywords: Community education, NGOs, Rehabilitation, Ex-inmates, Recidivism.

Introduction

Recidivism is a huge challenge in Nigeria, with an estimated 60% of ex-inmates going back to crime and getting caught (re-offending) within two years of release (Nigerian Prisons Service, 2022). Recidivism, however, is the tendency of individuals to relapse into criminal behaviour after being released from prison or completing a sentence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). Langan & Levin (2002) define recidivism as a measure of the extent to which offenders return to criminal behaviour after release from prison. In essence, recidivism is the relapse criminal behavior or the failure to change after attempting to reform, or returning to prison or committing a new crime after release.

However, the spate of criminal recidivism in Nigeria is inimical to national plan and development. It also has adverse social and economic consequences not only on offenders' families and communities, but also on public safety and cohesion studies have it that community members often show negative attitudes to ex-inmates, in the form of stigma, discrimination, and rejection (Adebayo, 2022). These negative attitudes and behaviours shown to ex-inmates can contribute to the high recidivism rate in Nigeria. Given the education of community members about the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates, community education programmes can help to reduce stigma, discrimination, and rejection, facilitating smooth reintegration thereby reducing recidivism rates.

In examining the role of community education, this paper argues without doubt that it is an effective follow-up programme of NGOs in the rehabilitation of ex-inmates for reduction of recidivism in Nigeria but the complex nature of the challenges besetting programme implementation appears to be undefeatable. Therefore, there is absolute need to identify these impediments in order to find possible solutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of community education as a follow-up programme of NGOs in the rehabilitation of ex-inmates against recidivism in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Community Education

Community education is a vital tool in reducing stigmatisation of Correctional centres' ex-inmates and mitigating the rise of recidivism. According to recent studies, community education programmes can significantly improve the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates into the communities (Adeagbo, 2020).

Community education refers to the process of educating individuals and communities about social issues, promoting social change, and empowering individuals to take control of their lives (Kidd & Kral, 2018). Alternatively, Community education is a process that aims to educate and empower individuals and communities to take control of their lives, promote social change, and address social issues (West, 2014). In the context of prison ex-inmates, community education programmes focus on providing education, training, and support to help them reintegrate into society. In essence, community education is a community-based educational awareness that involves members of the community (or society) with an aim to engender social change for community and national development.

However, research has shown that community education programmes can be highly effective in reducing recidivism rates. A study in Nigeria found that prisoners who participated in education programmes had a significantly lower recidivism rate compared to those who did not participate (Oloruntimehin, 2018). Another study found that community education programmes can reduce recidivism rates by up to 30% (Gendreau et al., 2010).

The need for a continuous community-based education programmes cannot be overemphasised. Community education has been successfully applied in various settings, including Correctional centres, communities, and NGOs. For example, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has implemented a prison education programme that provides education and training to prisoners (NOUN, 2020). Similarly,

NGOs such as Prison Fellowship Nigeria has been involved in providing community-based education and rehabilitation programmes for ex-inmates, with the goal of reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration (Owasanoye, 2017).

In the light of the foregoing, NGOs can play a crucial role in providing community education programmes to prison ex-inmates. NGOs can use community education to

resolve the problem of unmitigated rise of recidivism among ex-inmates in Nigeria by implementing the following:

- Provide education and training: NGOs can provide education and training programmes that equip ex-inmates with skills and knowledge to reintegrate into their communities.
- Promote social change: NGOs can promote social change by educating communities about the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates.
- Empower ex-inmates: NGOs can empower ex-inmates by providing them with support and resources to take control of their lives.
- Collaborate with government agencies: NGOs can collaborate with government agencies to ensure that community education programmes are integrated into the criminal justice system.

Concept of follow-up programmes for Rehabilitation

Follow-up programmes for rehabilitation refer to the services provided to ex-inmates after their release from prison to facilitate their reintegration into society (Otu, 2022).

The primary purpose of follow-up programmes for released inmates is to provide ongoing support and services to help them successfully reintegrate into community, reduce the likelihood of recidivism, improve employment and education outcomes and promote community safety. Studies have shown that follow-up programmes have the potential to significantly reduce recidivism rates among ex-inmates. A study by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found that participants in a follow-up programme had a recidivism rate of 26.4%, compared to 44.7% for non-participants (NIJ, 2019). Another study published in the Journal of Offender Rehabilitation found that a follow-up programme reduced recidivism rates by 35% (Taxman, 2014).

Concept of Recidivism

Recidivism refers to the tendency of ex-inmates to commit crime again after their release from Correctional centre (Nigerian Prisons Service, 2022). Recidivism is a major challenge in Nigeria, with an estimated 60% of ex-inmates re-offending within two years of release.

It is a significant challenge in the criminal justice system, as it undermines efforts to rehabilitate offenders and integrate them back into society.

Countries with low recidivism rates, such as Norway and Sweden, have implemented effective rehabilitation programmes that focus on preparing inmates for release and reintegrating them into society. These programmes include:

- Vocational Training Providing inmates with vocational training and education to equip them with skills for employment.
- Counselling and Therapy Offering counselling and therapy to address underlying issues, such as substance abuse and mental health problems.
- Community-Based Programmes: Implementing community-based programmes that provide support and services to ex-inmates, such as housing, employment, and mentorship.

While Nordic countries' paradigm stands out as worth emulating, Nigerian experience is a far cry to expected outcomes. Hence, the persistent hike in recidivism.

At the base of recidivism rising rate in Nigeria are these factors which needs consistent, strategic, focused and honest attention:

- Lack of Effective Rehabilitation Programmes in the correctional centres;
- Poverty and Unemployment;
- Stigma and Discrimination making it challenging for ex-inmates to access education, employment, and housing;

- Corruption and Inadequate Justice System which can lead to unfair treatment and prolonged incarceration, increasing the likelihood of recidivism.
- However, the implications of high recidivism in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised as they include:
 - Increased Crime Rates: Recidivism contributes to increased crime rates, undermining public safety and security.
 - Strain on the Criminal Justice System: Recidivism puts a strain on Nigeria's already overburdened criminal justice system.
- Economic Burden: Recidivism results in significant economic costs, including the cost of incarceration, law enforcement, and victim support services.
- Social Consequences: Recidivism can lead to social consequences, such as increased fear of crime, decreased community trust, and strained relationships between law enforcement and the community.

Nexus between Rehabilitation and Recidivism

Rehabilitation programmes can reduce recidivism rates by providing ex-inmates with the skills and support they need to reintegrate into the communities (Adebayo, 2022). Effective rehabilitation programmes can address the root causes of recidivism, including poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. However, the success of efforts to rehabilitate inmates is undermined because offenders often return to the same communities where they can easily become involved again in criminal activities. Studies have shown that recidivism was more constant among inmates who returned to their former neighbourhoods than inmates who relocated to new communities (Vozzella, 2004).

Recidivism and NGOs vis-a-vis Community Education

Rehabilitation as a therapeutic process for reformation of inmates is a continuum that begins inside the custodial facility (such as Correctional centre) and extends into the community upon release (Lipsey et al., 2010). This process involves a range of

interventions, including education, counseling, and job training, aimed at promoting behavioural change and reducing recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Upon release, the reintegration process continues in the community, where former inmates require ongoing support and services to maintain a law-abiding lifestyle (Petersilia, 2003).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that "Community-based reintegration programmes can help released inmates against relapsing into crime and its eventual imprisonment by providing support and services to offenders after release." (UNODC, 2019). To this end, NGOs play a crucial role in providing community education programmes that facilitate the smooth reintegration of ex-inmates into society (Otu, 2022). NGOs, such as the Prison Fellowship Nigeria, provide education and support to community members to reduce stigma and discrimination against ex-inmates (Prison Fellowship Nigeria).

Community education programmes provided by NGOs have the potency to reduce recidivism rate by up to 30%. These forms of education include: First, literacy programme to educate community members about the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates a tool for attitudinal change, safer communities, and national development. Research conducted by Otu (2022) underscores the transformative power of literacy programmes, revealing that they can significantly enhance community awareness about the challenges faced by ex-inmates by a substantial 40%. This finding suggests that literacy programmes can play a crucial role in promoting social understanding, reducing stigma, and fostering a supportive environment for successful reintegration of ex-inmates into society.

Second, NGOs advocate for the rights of ex-inmates in worship and commercial centres, promoting acceptance. A study by Adebayo (2022) demonstrated that advocacy programmes increased community acceptance of ex-inmates by 30%. Third, NGOs utilize billboards, mass communication, and community radio programmes to raise awareness about the importance of rehabilitation and

reintegration of ex-inmates. Research by Nwosu (2022) showed that these efforts increased community awareness about the challenges faced by ex-inmates by 50%.

Finally, NGOs provide training sessions such as vocational and life skill trainings and counselling and mentoring services to equip ex inmates with knowledge and skills to facilitate their reintegration.

Present challenges

Despite efforts to reduce recidivism rates, Nigeria's recidivism rate remains high, with approximately 60% of ex-inmates reoffending within two years of release (NBS, 2020). This disturbing reality is traceable to the challenges affecting the NGOs rehabilitation activities, which include:

- **Limited funding:** NGOs often face limited funding, which hinders their ability to provide effective community education programmes. A report by the International Centre for Prison Studies (2022) found that NGOs in Nigeria receive only 10% of the funding they need to provide effective rehabilitation programmes.
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Many communities in Nigeria lack the infrastructure needed to support community education programmes. A study by the Journal of Education and Human Development (2022) found that 70% of communities in Nigeria lack access to functional literacy centres.
- **Corruption:** Corruption is a major challenge in Nigeria, and it hinders the effectiveness of community education programmes. A report by Transparency International (2022) found that corruption in Nigeria's prison system has led to the diversion of funds meant for rehabilitation programmes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that community education is a vital tool in reducing recidivism rates among ex-inmates in Nigeria. NGOs play a crucial role in providing community education programmes that facilitate the smooth reintegration of ex-inmates into society. However, the challenges affecting the implementation of community education programmes must be addressed to ensure their effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Increase funding: Governments and donors should increase funding for NGOs to provide community education programmes.
2. Improve infrastructure: Governments should invest in building functional literacy centres and other infrastructure to support community education programmes.
3. Reduce corruption: Governments should take measures to reduce corruption in the prison system and ensure that funds meant for rehabilitation programmes are not diverted.
4. Scale up community education programmes: NGOs should scale up community education programmes to reach more ex-inmates and communities.
5. Monitor and evaluate programmes: Governments and NGOs should monitor and evaluate community education programmes to ensure their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
6. Provide vocational and life skill training: NGOs should provide vocational and life skill training to equip ex-inmates with knowledge and skills to facilitate their reintegration.

7. Promote social change: NGOs should promote social change by educating communities about the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-inmates.

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