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CRIMINAL ASSOCIATION AND RECIDIVISM IN SELECTED PRISONS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

Within the theoretical ambit of the Differential Association Theory propounded by Edwin Sutherland, this study provides empirical insight into the surge in the incidence of recidivism due to certain factors within the correctional facilities that increase chances of negative criminal association. The study therefore examined the link between criminal association and recidivism using selected prisons in Rivers State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, data were sourced from the field using questionnaire and Key Persons Interviews (KPIs). To analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics along with the thematic method were used. The result shows that criminal association occasioned by overcrowding and lack of proper separation of the different categories of inmates within the selected correctional facilities is responsible for recidivism. However, there is need to investigate other causes as criminal association alone may not be significant enough to birth reoffending. Based on the findings, the study recommends that there should be adequate separation of inmates and provision of more facilities to preclude indiscriminate confinement of inmates that may lead to recidivism.

KEYWORDS

Association, Criminal, Recidivism, Criminal Association, Rivers State.

INTRODUCTION

Correctional facilities serve the purpose of making people or inmates penitent and this done by ensuring that opportunities are provided for the inmate to contemplate their crime and endeavour to go through the reformatory process so as to become better persons in the society after completing their term. This is perhaps why it became necessary to categorise and separate prisoners depending on the gravity of crime in order to prevent any negative influence that may arise through the frequency of communication between those with less grievous offences and hardened criminals (Clare & Krammer, 1976 cited in Dambazau, 2011). This is built on the notion that keeping all categories of prisoners in close proximity to each other is likely to make physical and social contamination possible (Clare & Krammer, 1976 cited in Dambazau, 2011). Therefore, the correctional centre, represent a confined environment within the criminal justice system tunnel where criminals are sent for a period of time to go through correctional processes in order to become better citizens (Obioha, 2002; Iwarimie-Jaja & Raimi, 2019).

Therefore, there are basic social and cultural characteristics that are present in correctional centres and other similar institutions, which do not exist in the larger society. The prison environment with its different culture and way of life embodies a complete design capable of changing the attitudes of individual members for better or for worse depending on their personal experiences, social networks and associations. The lifestyle in the correctional centres creates the means and forms for the adjustment processes of the inmates. Its culture is unique and consists of all kinds of reorientation of values and internalizations. (Obioha, 1995).

However, Obioha (1995) is of the opinion that in most cases, the correctional facilities have not lived up to expectation as they have rather become places where inmates are further criminalized instead of rehabilitating them. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory provides a possible insight into what transpires within the walls of correctional facilities making it a possible for relapse to occur quite easily. According to Sutherland, criminal behavior is imbibed in the same way as law-abiding behavior. He argued that, this learning activity is possible through interactions with others, by a method of communication within intimate groups. The implication is that, just as one can be socialized in good behavior by communicating with people who have good behaviour, so also bad behavior can be gained or learned through the same process of socialization (Thomas & Paul, 2010). Hence, it can be inferred that in a situation where new convicts are confined together with hardened criminals there will be a criminal learning among them resulting in recidivism. In light of the foregoing, this study tries to examine the relationship between criminal association and recidivism in selected correctional facilities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Globally, correctional facilities are established not just to serve as institutions where people are punished for their crime, but also as places for ensuring that people become positively transformed into better persons in order for them to be reintegrated into society. However, despite long years of investment in prison reforms in Nigeria, genuine reformation of inmates has not been successful when we consider the fact that



there are still numerous cases of recidivism the country's correctional centres.

The above concern has served as a huge source of attraction for several researchers with the aim of explaining the causes of rising incidences of recidivism. For instance, while Igbo and Ugwuoke (2003) has argued that the problem is linked to the public's continuous stigmatization of ex-convicts, Ugwuoke (2010) seems to believe that the challenge of recidivism is associated with the unhealthy correctional system that promotes the spread and exchange of criminal influences and ideas in the country. On their own part, Chenube (2011) and Tenibiaje (2013) contends that recidivism is often triggered by alcohol and drug abuse, as well as poor education and influence of peers. Some other drivers of recidivism that have been identified by past scholars include marital challenges, the number of siblings / children, low socio-economic status, negative ethnicity, family background, prison sentences and the type of crime (Abrifor, Atare & Muoghotu, 2012). In addition, Mayers (1984) believes that unemployment is a factor that increases recidivism, Eisenberg (1985) indicts low level of education as a major causal factor, Raimi and Bieh (2009) indict low entrepreneurship level as a major enabler, while, Ugwuoke (2013) sees low level of resettlement and reintegration of ex-convicts as the reason for recidivism.

Although the studies highlighted above have increased knowledge on the issue of recidivism, a closer examination reveals that they nevertheless focused more on factors outside the correctional facilities or institutions. Hence, very little is still known about internal factors that increase the chances of the occurrence of recidivism in Nigerian prisons. As a result, study is aimed at examining the nexus between criminal association and recidivism in selected correctional facilities in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study will attempt to; 1) Unravel the existence of criminal subculture among inmate clusters leading to recidivism; 2) Examine how gang membership of inmates' promotion criminal association resulting to recidivism and; 3) Provide an understanding of criminal association by peer groups and recidivism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Criminal Sub-Culture

Research has revealed that having antisocial companions increases the likelihood of misconduct. Criminal justice administrators, especially orthodontists (prison chiefs), are not magicians. You can strip off a criminal's title, property, identity, or power, but you can't do covert actions that could inherently "cause a crime". The number of people who were imprisoned, released, re-detained, and detained suggests that a criminal subculture exists in prison and implicitly causes re-offending. Because people in free societies have internalized the norms and values of their societies, detainees have tried to maintain the traditional prison rules and regulations as much as possible, yet have been able to access the "We are working to assimilate the inmate code. However, because the value of inmates' subcultural codes does not always match both official correctional centres and mainstream social value, prisoners are subject to the rules of voluntary inmates, technically known as the 'inmate code'. "Prisonization" in the criminal literature that requires coordination, readjustment, and strict compliance with regulations. In addition, what is considered unacceptable by the outside world is encouraged and rewarded by prison subcultures that spread inside the walls of the entire facility.

According to Giddens (2006), the living environment of correctional centres tends to drive the wedge between prisoners and the outside world. They cannot align their behavior with social norms. Prisoners need to be in harmony with a completely different environment from the "outside", and the habits and attitudes they learn in correctional centre are often the exact opposite of what they should get. The same source further added that these debilitated prisoners had a grudge against ordinary citizens, learned to accept violence normally, and gained contact with experienced criminals to maintain when released. He claimed that he had the potential to gain previously unknown criminal skills. For this reason, correctional centres are sometimes called "criminal colleges." Based on this, Chukwumerije (2012) states that one of the criteria for judging the effectiveness of the prison system and its reform capacity is the number of prisoners who stay outside the prison walls after completing prison conditions. I guess there is.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned situation has hindered the rehabilitation of prisoners. In prisoners' codes or "prisonizations" internalized by prisoners while in correctional centre, they pass successful reform and reintegration to prevent further crime and consequent reconviction (recidivism) It is difficult or impossible. Prison subcultures are always the opposite of the official and ideal purpose of imprisonment. Prepares and strengthens inmates for a generally accepted culture of correctional centres and societies by not teaching all the good aspects of correctional centre and social norms and values. According to Iwarimie-Jaja (2003), this process allows new inmates to live according to the beliefs of prisoner status by adapting to the conditions and influencing factors that breed and deepen criminals and antisocial cultures. Begins when learning the subject of criminal ideology in the prison community.

Clearly, the concept of subculture has been perpetuated by a major group of correctional centres. New inmates learn the major group criminal culture they join and associate in correctional centre. New prisoners develop a severe degree of criminal offense during imprisonment as they continue to associate with key groups in correctional centres. Some major groups of correctional centres are working on a subculture of violence. This group teaches members to accept violence as a legitimate means of performing other criminal acts. In addition to using violence, key groups teach members that they are active in perpetuating crime. Prison subcultures influence most inmates to be recidivists (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2003). Critically valued prisoners form a subculture in correctional centre as a survival mechanism that alleviates the "pain of imprisonment" and thereby adapts to the ennui prison environment. They engage in this extraordinary behavior and enable them to adapt to inhabitable Nigerian correctional centres. Unfortunately, this development in our correctional centres rather underlies both the "star" (amateur or first time criminal) and the experienced criminal in the criminal tradition, Take the time to become a "repeater".

Gang Membership

Several studies have also shown that gang membership identified as members of security threat groups is clearly associated with rule violations (Tewksbury, Connor, & Denney, 2014). Therefore, researchers have observed that the first step in the process of solving this challenge involves identifying groups of criminals who are at high risk of recidivism. This is because identifying characteristics that capture a combination of risk factors improves the effectiveness of classification and risk management (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010).

However, according to Varano, Huebner, and Bynum (2011), gang affiliation is apparently responsible for recidivism, but other factors may be involved in both gang membership and recidivism. Therefore, when explaining recidivism based on gang membership, distinguish between prisoners with street gang connections (Varano, Huebner, and Bynum, 2011) and prisoners who only belong to prison gangs is needed. This separation can greatly help create a more effective oversight and service strategy after release.

In a cohort study of prisoners trapped in Nebraska, gang members involved in the study were characterized by young people, less likely to have high school diplomas, and having marriages and children compared to non-gang counterparts (Krienert & Fleisher, 2001). Their findings also show that gang members have been involved criminally in the past. For example, gang members have reported earlier arrests, reduced education, reduced commitment to legal employment, increased drug use, and increased prior arrests than non-gang members. Gang members have a similar number of prior beliefs when compared to non-gang members, despite being young overall.

Combining these results with well-documented findings on recidivism, Dooley, Alan, and David (2014) suggest that gang members are more likely to encounter higher failure rates than unrelated members and conclude. A review of the gang literature provides a rationale for why gang membership itself produces these effects (California Department of Corrections, 2011). These high level of failure could be an explanation to why they recidivate as a response to the society that does not help them succeed.

Other research reports have indicated that in addition to conflicts with other gangs, gang members are involved in a disproportionate amount of nonviolent

and violent criminal activities (Decker & Van, 2015; Huff, 2016). It is also noted that many of these gang members are eventually convicted and imprisoned. Notwithstanding the incarceration, they are responsible for approximately one-quarter to a half of all the management problems encountered in the correctional centres (Knox, 2009; Nafekh and Stys, 2014) and more likely than non-gang members to be involved in prison violence.

It is also observed that majority of gang affiliated offenders will eventually re-enter society where they most of the time will again become a concern to public safety. It is not overemphasis to say that, it is germane to reduce gang violence both inside prisons and in the community. It has been a continuous research on the intersections of guns, gangs, and drugs and their effects on offending, particularly at the aggregation level, mainly about murder. McGarrell et al. (2006) suggests that individual-level intervention for high-risk criminals can reduce the overall crime rate. In fact, researchers who have been associated to the Ceasefire, have regularly attributed the dramatic decline in youthful homicides in Boston in the 1990s, directly to the program (Braga, 2003), still, the conclusions by the wider research community on the effectiveness of these programmes have been mixed (Rosenfeld et al., 2005).

Peer Group

It is a known fact that peer group influence is also another powerful predictor of recidivism as could be seen in the doctrine of the Sutherland Differential Association theory. Although the pressure seems to be more pronounced on youngsters in a group setting than relatively older peers or those perceived to be smart and clever, there exists a trajectory of criminal learning and symbiotic relationship among these social

actors (McGuire, 2009). Tenibiaje (2013) asserts that direct behavioural learning through modeling and imitation is the potent factor in group influence. The effect that peer group pressure may exert on experimentation and other manifestations of growing independence of youths are cases in points on criminal behaviour and recidivism.

Crime researchers like Beaver, Shutt, Boutwell, Ratchford, Roberts and Barness (2008) have argued that spending much time with family or friends who engage in criminal behaviour is also a stronger risk factor for offending and reoffending. Moreover, family and marital challenges are equally strong risk factors for constant violation of conventional rules and regulations as well as recidivism. This is because family members are often primarily responsible for providing housing, financial support and emotional support not only to the law-abiding members but also their relatives who are ex-convicts. But when these expected mutual care and supports are substituted for discrimination and stigmatization, post-prison rehabilitation, integration and adaptation may be difficult. Consequently, the chances of such stigmatized released inmates to relapse into the act that initially took them to the correctional centre are indeed very high (Leschied, Chiodo, Nowicki and Rodger, 2008).

This is why the reintegration question has drawn a great deal of attention from criminology and criminal justice researchers. Each year more than 675,000 prisoners are released into a community ill-equipped and unprepared to consolidate the reformation process. When these released inmates are not well welcomed and helped to settle, their criminal gangs will be the next alternative for survival (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010).

Even when substantial resources have been directed at this small subgroup of offenders, few researchers are interested in the timing and Incidence of recidivism in a sample of high-risk men after being released from correctional centre. Therefore, it is particularly important to understand the long-term consequences of this population. Almost all criminals in jail are released, and most occur within three years of entry (Hughes et al., 2001). Failure to consider the needs of offenders returning to the community may undermine the ultimate effectiveness of deterrence and incapacitation-based justice policy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Differential Association Theory. Differential-related theory was first presented by Sutherland in 1939, but has been modified several times. Two fundamental elements of Sutherland's theory are that the learning process itself and the learning content are important for understanding criminal activity (cited in Sutherland, 1949, Introduction to Criminology, 2003). Learning is defined as "habits and knowledge that develop as a result of an individual's experience in entering and adapting to the environment" (Vold & Bernard, 1986). Sutherland considered "crime" as politically defined (cited in 2003, Introduction to Criminology). Nine hypotheses that identify the processes in which a person is involved in criminal activity form the basis of differential association theory (Sutherland, 1949).

Sutherland hypothesized that criminal activity was learned in intimate social groups, but that these groups might not be delinquent, and that criminal activity was acquired through such contacts (Sutherland, 1949; Ekpenyong, Raimi & Ekpenyong, 2012). Criminal behavior is primarily learnt from close associates such as family and peers; through associations with people

approval of illegal behavior, individuals may learn to become criminal themselves (Introduction to Criminology, 2003). This learnt behavior includes both the technical skills necessary to commit criminal acts and attitudes which are non-conformist and thus conducive to criminal activities (Hollin, 2002). It is important to note that Sutherland did not assume that all individuals who come into contact with criminals will become criminal themselves, though critics such as Vold suggested this. The core proposition of differential association theory is that an excess of criminogenic “definitions,” as opposed to conformist “definitions,” are conducive to criminal to criminality; alone is not enough to incite criminal behavior (Introduction to Criminology, 2003; Ogadi, Raimi & Nwachukwu, 2012). As Sutherland states, “Though criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since non-criminal behaviour is an expression of the same needs and values” (Sutherland, 1947 cited in Introduction to Criminology, 2003).

Sutherland and his associate Cressey reject the psychological assumption that criminals were somehow different to law abiding citizens; instead they suggested learning how to commit crimes is the same as learning any other behavior (as cited in Introduction to Criminology, 2003). Underlying assumption of differential theory is that crime is “normal”, rather than “pathological”, as it is learned the same way as all other behaviors. Differential association theory may be reduced to the notion that individuals engage in criminal activities because they have associated with and absorbed pro-criminal definitions with greater frequency, duration, priority and intensity than with anti-criminal definitions (Sutherland, 1949 cited in Introduction to Criminology, 2003). Within the framework of this theory, correctional centres in Nigeria contend with

overcrowding resulting in indiscriminate confinement of criminals of different backgrounds. This gives room for interaction among inmates to the extent of exposing them to even the hardened criminals. In this way inmates associate with, learn and absorbed pro-criminal tendencies with greater frequency, duration, priority and intensity than with anti-criminal definitions. And when, the reformation or rehabilitation facilities and efforts in correctional centres are not sufficient to neutralize the influence from such setting, it leads to more propensity of inmates to relapse into criminality thereby frustrating the cardinal objectives of reformation and rehabilitation.

METHODOLOGY

The study area is all correctional facilities located in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on this, the correctional facilities selected for the study are Port Harcourt Correctional centre, Degema Correctional centre and Ahoada correctional centre. Given the records made available in the researcher, the total population of recidivists in the three correctional facilities is 727. Drawing from this, a sample size of 393 recidivists was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. However, for interview purpose, 15 staff across the three prisons were purposively sampled. The Key Person Interview (KPI) was deployed to elicit information from the 15 interview respondents while the questionnaire method was used to gather data from the 393 recidivists. Consequently, a total of 361 questionnaire were retrieved from the respondents. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential (First-Order Correlations) were used to analyse the data to test for a relationship between criminal association and recidivism. The results derived from the KPIs were analysed using the thematic

method. This helped to provide supportive information for the quantitative data.

RESULTS

Table 1: Criminal Associations in the Correctional Centres

Items	A	D	UNC	\bar{x}	S.D.	S.E.	Remarks
There is any criminal/deviant sub-culture among the inmates	263 72.9%	71 19.7%	27 7.5%	1.35	0.614	0.032	Disagreed
It is a must for all inmates to be involved in term of association with the criminal sub-culture	52 14.4%	275 76.2%	34 9.4%	1.95	0.955	0.026	Disagreed
There is a concrete structure in terms of norms, expected behaviour and role expectations in the criminal sub-culture of the inmates	110 30.5%	218 60.4%	33 9.1%	1.79	0.593	0.031	Disagreed
There are any tangible benefits of associating with the criminal sub-culture in the correctional centre	116 32.1%	199 55.1%	46 12.7%	1.81	0.642	0.034	Disagreed
Your re-imprisonment is in any way connected to the desire to fellowship with inmates/colleagues	83 23.0%	233 64.5%	45 12.5%	1.89	0.587	0.031	Disagreed
Your re-imprisonment can be traced to the company of friends you kept in the previous imprisonment	165 45.7%	174 48.2%	22 6.1%	1.60	0.602	0.032	Disagreed
There is a link with the crime you committed that led to your imprisonment and the social vices internalized in your previous imprisonment	278 77.0%	60 16.6%	23 6.4%	1.29	0.579	0.030	Disagreed
Your re-imprisonment was in any way influenced by friends or persons you related with during the previous incarceration	52 14.4%	286 79.2%	23 6.4%	1.92	0.449	0.024	Disagreed
Weighted mean = 1.70, Min = 1, Max = 3, N = 361							

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Key: A = Agree, D = Disagree, UNC = Uncertain, \bar{x} = Means, S.D. = Std. Deviation, S.E. = Std. Error of Mean

Table 1 shows the nature of criminal associations in the correctional centres. The statements were rated in a scale of three values. Responses were rated as A = Agreed, D = Disagreed, and UNC = Uncertain. Values were awarded to the options as D=1, A=3 and U=2, giving rise to 1+3+2=6. The mean score was 2 ($6/3=2$); hence, by merging the score, analysis indicated that any mean score 2 and above connotes that

respondents “agreed” to the variable statement, while any mean score below 2 indicated that respondents “disagreed” to the variable statement. However, noted that statements in negations were reversed during analysis for proper results. The Remarks shown in table 4.4 reveals the overall opinion of the respondents (either they agreed or disagreed to the statement).

Table 2: First-Order Partial Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between Criminal Associations in Correctional centres and Recidivism with Prison Type Controlled

	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Df	r	r ²	P-value	Re-mark
Control Variable:									
Prison Type	Criminal Associations	13.60	1.101	361	358	.019	0.0004	.718	Not Sig.
	Recidivism	25.68	4.861						
Zero-Order (Pearson) correlation between prison facilities & recidivism = .015; p=.779									

*Sig. at $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed); Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 presents the first-order partial correlation analysis showing the relationship between criminal association and recidivism with prison type controlled. The zero-order (Pearson) correlation analysis had earlier been used to analysis the variables under study and found not to be significant ($r = .015$ $n=361$, $P(.779) < 0.05$), however suitable is the first-order partial correlation analysis after subjecting the variables to linearity and collinearity diagnoses. The results show that “it is a must for all inmates to be involved in term of association with the criminal sub-culture” ($\bar{x} = 1.95$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating and was

followed in succession by “your re-imprisonment can be traced to the company of friends you kept in the previous imprisonment” ($\bar{x} = 1.92$), “your re-imprisonment is in any way connected to the desire to fellowship with inmates/colleagues” ($\bar{x} = 1.89$), “there are any tangible benefits of associating with the criminal sub-culture in the prison” ($\bar{x} = 1.81$), “there is a concrete structure in terms of norms, expected behaviour and role expectations in the criminal sub-culture of the inmates” ($\bar{x} = 1.79$), “your re-imprisonment can be traced to the company of friends you kept in the previous imprisonment” ($\bar{x} = 1.60$), “there is any criminal/deviant sub-culture among the

inmates” ($\bar{x} = 1.35$), while the least was “there is a link with the crime you committed that led to your imprisonment and the social vices internalized in your previous imprisonment” ($\bar{x} = 1.29$).

DISCUSSION

This study seeks to unravel the link between criminal association and recidivism. The study used descriptive statistic to analyse data collected from three selected prisons in Rivers State. The analysis indicates a situation where the qualitative findings shed more lights on the quantitative points. A key person interview conducted with one of the staff of the correctional centre revealed that correctional centres do not exist without some sort of association. He noted that the kind of association or interaction that exists particularly among inmates in the correctional centre remains an utmost interest not just to the government or prison officials but also to members of the public. The interviewee revealed that originally, the correctional centre should present an opportunity for character reformation and re-direction, especially to inmates who have embraced criminality or became entangled in deviant behaviours. In his words:

Prisons do not exist without some sort of association... The kind of association that exist among inmates in the prison remains of utmost interest not just to the government or prison officials but to members of the public as well... Originally, the prison should present an opportunity for character reformation and re-direction to those who

have embraced criminality or gotten entangled in deviant behaviours (KPI/Superintendent of Prison (SP)/Degema/2019)

The above indicates that prisons are meant to provide inmates with opportunities to be fully corrected and rehabilitated so that recidivism is curtailed. It signifies the importance of character examination during interaction with inmates to prevent criminal association among prisoners. An interview conducted with a staff of the correctional centre reveals that there should be an arrangement where inmates with aberrant behaviours are redirected to become conformist to reduce recidivism. The interviewee stated:

The prison should be an arrangement where those with aberrant behaviours or mindsets are skillfully redirected to become socially acceptable or conformist... This will help to reduce recidivism (Assistant Superintendent of Prison (ASP)/Port Harcourt Prison/2019)

The above shows that there is a need to adequately monitor inmates to know their behaviours and probably separate inmates with notorious criminal association from others with non-criminal association for proper orientation, correction and rehabilitation to prevent negative interaction among inmates. On the other hand, the result from the first-order partial correlation also shows that there is no significant relationship between criminal association in correctional centres and recidivism despite controlling for prison type ($r = .019$, $n = 361$, $P(.718) > 0.05$). The result inferred that the relationship between criminal

association and recidivism was not directly mediated by prison type. The positive direction of the correlation analysis, though not significant indicates that inmates with higher criminal association scores had higher recidivism scores. Also, when the prison type was controlled in the first-order partial correlation analysis, the positive correlation became stronger ($r = .019$) compare to zero-order (Pearson) correlation ($r = .015$), though not significant for both zero-order (Pearson) ($p = .779$) and first-order partial correlation ($p = .718$). This finding slightly deviates from Iwarimie-Jaja (2003)'s study that prison subculture influences most inmates to become recidivists.

By implication, the results from the first-order partial correlation analysis shows that criminal association positively predict recidivism by 1.9%, while other variables not included in the analysis may have accounted for the remaining percent, however not significant. This suggests that there was need to subject the variables to higher statistics with other variables inputted to further examine strength of criminal association in predicting recidivism. But for the moment, the study accept that there is no significant relationship between criminal associations and recidivism in the study correctional centres until further analysis proved otherwise. This finding contradicts Tewksbury, Connor and Denney (2014) that gang membership of criminal association, which is being identified as member of a security threat group, is positively associated with rule violations.

The qualitative findings revealed the reason why correlation between criminal association and recidivism is positive, though not significant. It signifies need for further analysis to clarify deviation between qualitative and quantitative interviews and signals important aspect of research interest. The findings depict porous nature of correctional centres and how

unsupervised state of criminals' association led to recidivism among inmates. The interviews conducted show that uncontrolled criminal associations in correctional centres has made inmates to use imprisonment as avenue to secretly re-strategize ways to re-engage in criminal activities after release from prison. This finding supports Varano, Huebner, and Bynum (2011) that in outward appearance, gang affiliation is source of recidivism, yet, it might be of other factors are responsible for both gang membership and recidivism.

CONCLUSION

The Findings of the research revealed that although, criminal association exists within the prison wall and it is a contributive factor of recidivism, criminal association alone is not strong enough to cause recidivism. This suggests that there are arrays of other factors that work to influence reoffending, hence suggesting the need for more research to unravel other causal factors of recidivism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

Establishment of More Prisons: Given that overpopulation is a major reason for adverse criminal association and by extension recidivism, there is need for the establishment of more correctional facilities in the country. A situation whereby the prisons are currently lacking far beyond their capacity will obviously reduce the impact of any rehabilitation or reformation efforts. This can be achieved through partnerships with relevant international and indigenous organizations that fund correctional facilities across the world such as the International

Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA), National Institute of Corrections, the World Bank's programme on Correction and Rehabilitation among others.

Adequate stratification or separation of Inmates:

There is every need to ensure an adequate separation of inmates based on the degree of crime commission or offence. This will go a long way to reduce the degree of contact that a prisoner with a lesser offence can have with one with a higher offence. By extension, it will reduce the level of criminal association in the correctional facilities.

The Role of the Judiciary: In addition to the above, there is every need for the judiciary to ensure that cases brought to the courts are speedily attended to in order to avoid undue piling up of cases. This will ensure that those with lesser offences are not kept in the correctional facilities for too long thereby reducing the problem of overpopulation.

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