

An Overview of the Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Methods for Drug Offenders in Nigeria Criminal Justice System

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Abstract

The paper explored the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing the effectiveness of rehabilitation methods, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive and context-specific interventions tailored to the Nigerian context. It also addressed the challenges facing rehabilitation efforts, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and stigmatisation of offenders post-release. Through a critical analysis of the existing rehabilitation framework, this paper provided insights into potential reforms and innovations to enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation methods for drug offenders within Nigeria's criminal justice system. It underscored the importance of adopting evidence-based practices, promoting collaboration between governmental agencies, civil society organisations, and international partners, and prioritising holistic approaches that addressed the complex interplay of social, economic, and psychological factors contributing to criminal behaviour and substance abuse. The paper made use of doctrinal modes of research by employing primary and secondary sources or materials. It was found that the treatment of drug offenders in Nigeria is more of punishment rather than rehabilitation and although there are robust provisions for the employment of rehabilitation methods for the treatment of drug offenders, the punitive measure outweighs the rehabilitative measures. Ultimately, the paper advocated for a paradigm shift towards a rehabilitative justice model that prioritises the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society, thereby promoting public safety, reducing recidivism, and fostering a more just and equitable criminal justice system in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Offenders, Rehabilitation, Criminal, Drug Offenders, Recidivism, Inmate.*

1.0 Introduction

In Nigeria, as in many other countries, the rehabilitation of offenders, particularly those involved in drug-related crimes, presents a significant challenge within the criminal justice system. The prevalence of substance abuse, coupled with socio-economic disparities and inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure, underscores the urgent need for effective interventions to address both the root causes of criminal behaviour and the rehabilitation of offenders.

This paper provides an overview of the context within which rehabilitation efforts for drug offenders operate in Nigeria's criminal justice system. It highlights the complexities and

challenges inherent in the rehabilitation process and underscores the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation methods.

Nigeria faces a dual challenge of addressing both the societal impacts of substance abuse and the rehabilitation and reintegration of drug offenders into society. With above 14.3 million (National Bureau of Statistics (2018))¹ drug users in the country and over 40% of Nigerian youths between ages 18-35 ingrained in the abuse of drugs (Agency Report, 2021),² according to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), substance abuse has become a pervasive issue, contributing to various forms of criminal activity, including drug trafficking, drug-related violence, and other crimes.

Within the criminal justice system, rehabilitation efforts for drug offenders primarily focus on incarceration, community-based rehabilitation programs, vocational training, counselling, and drug treatment programs. However, the effectiveness of these methods varies widely, influenced by factors such as resource availability, institutional capacity, and socio-economic disparities.

Moreover, the socio-economic and cultural context of Nigeria plays a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts. The stigmatisation of offenders, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and societal attitudes towards substance abuse pose significant barriers to successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Despite the efforts to enthrone corrections in Nigerian Prisons, particularly, through the passage of the Nigerian Correctional Service bill into law in 2019, the implementation of inmate rehabilitation policy in Nigeria remains a challenge as is the case with such other policies, thus, there is a growing recognition of the need for evidence-based practices and innovative approaches to rehabilitation within Nigeria's criminal justice system. By evaluating the effectiveness of existing methods and identifying areas for improvement, policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders can work towards developing more holistic, culturally sensitive, and sustainable rehabilitation interventions.

This paper seeks to contribute to this discourse by providing an overview of the effectiveness of rehabilitation methods for drug offenders within Nigeria's criminal justice system. Through a critical analysis of existing literature and empirical studies, it aims to inform policy and practice reforms aimed at enhancing rehabilitation outcomes, promoting public safety, and fostering a more just and equitable society.

2.0 Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Drug Offenders

A drug offender is a person who has been convicted of violating laws related to the possession, distribution, manufacture, or trafficking of controlled substances. Drug offences can vary widely in nature and severity, and they include possession, that is having illegal drugs for personal use, distribution and trafficking, selling, delivering, or distributing illegal drugs, manufacturing, producing or cultivating illegal drugs, such as operating a methamphetamine lab or growing marijuana without legal authorisation, paraphernalia, that is, the possession of equipment or materials intended for making, using, or concealing drugs, and prescription

¹ National Bureau of Statistics 'Drug use in Nigeria' (NBS, 2018) <<https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/881#:~:text=The%20past%20year%20prevalence%20of,between%2015%20and%2064%20years.>> accessed 5 October 2024

² Agency Report, '40% of Nigerians Deeply Involved in Drug Use-NDLEA' *Premium Times* (Lagos, 19 August 2021) <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/480118-40-of-nigerian-youth-deeply-involved-in-drug-abuse-ndlea.html?tztc=1>> accessed 5 October 2024

Fraud, that is, illegally obtaining prescription medications, such as forging prescriptions or visiting multiple doctors to obtain prescriptions.³

Drug offenders can range from casual users and small-time dealers to major traffickers involved in large-scale drug distribution networks. The legal consequences for drug offenders can include fines, probation, mandatory drug treatment programs, and imprisonment, depending on the jurisdiction, the specific circumstances of the offence, and the offender's criminal history.

2.2 Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as “a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment”⁴ by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In other words, rehabilitation facilitates involvement in significant life responsibilities like family caregiving and helps a child, adult, or senior person be as independent as possible in their daily functioning. It accomplishes this through collaborating with the individual and their family to address underlying medical issues and their symptoms, making adjustments to the environment to better meet their needs, utilising assistive technology, providing education to improve self-management, and reworking tasks to be more safely and independently completed. When combined, these techniques can assist a person in overcoming challenges related to thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking, eating, or moving.

Criminal rehabilitation refers to the process of helping convicted individuals reintegrate into society as law-abiding citizens. The primary goals are to reduce recidivism and to enable offenders to lead productive, fulfilling lives post-incarceration. There are four traditional methods of reformation of offenders in the Criminal Justice System, they are retribution, incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation. The premise of rehabilitation is that criminal activity tends to recur and that punitive judgment is most times insufficient to stop this propensity. Instead, treatment for underlying issues like drug addiction, mental illness, or a lack of training and work skills is necessary for offenders. It can therefore be said that an essential component of the criminal justice system is rehabilitation, which is the process of returning criminals to the lives of law-abiding citizenry. Its goals are to deal with the underlying causes of criminal conduct and assist offenders in gaining the knowledge and abilities needed to properly reintegrate back into society. Although there is disagreement on the efficacy of rehabilitation programs, many professionals think they can lower recidivism and assist offenders in becoming contributing members of society.⁵

3.0 Literature Review

Omoruyi⁶ analysed the dilemma convicted inmates face in custodial centres in accessing the much-needed rehabilitation, after discharge support and preventing relapse to crime. The

³ Olutola, Faloore O. "Drug Addiction and Rehabilitation in Nigeria: Insights from Sociological Theories" (2012) 12 (5) *Global Journal of Medical Research*.

⁴ World Health Organisation, 'Rehabilitation' (WHO 2024) <<https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/rehabilitation#:~:text=Rehabilitation%20is%20defined%20as%20%E2%80%9Ca,in%20interaction%20with%20their%20environment%E2%80%9D.>> accessed 5 October 2024

⁵ Ayuk, A. A., Owan, J. E. & Ekok, C.O., 'The Impact of prison reforms on the welfare of the inmates: A case study of Afokang prison, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria' (2013)13 (2) *Global Journal of human social science, sociology & Culture*, 2-6.

⁶ Omoruyi, O. L. & Ego, C. P. 'From Prison to Society: The Burden of Inmates' Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Recidivism in Nigeria Custodial Centres' (2023) 3 (2) *Journal of Social Theory and Research*

author adopted the Psychodynamic theory of crime as its theoretical framework. probed into the correlation between recidivism and rehabilitation, and how recidivism and poor treatment of offenders can be prevented, thereby institutionalising effective intervention and social integration programmes. The author concluded that poor inmates' rehabilitation and re-entry necessitated the frequency of inmates going back to crime for survival and that recidivism, rehabilitation and re-entry of offenders into society come with a huge cost and social burdens. Akanji *et al.*,⁷ researched the availability and types of rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria Prisons with specific case studies of Agodi Prison in Ibadan and Abologo Prison in Oyo town, both in Oyo state, Southwestern Nigeria, the authors explored the possible potential of the programmes in curbing recidivism as well as its connection with internal security and were able to discover that availability of the rehabilitation programmes which include academic, vocation and mid-industrial as well as counselling with inmates' utmost preference for secondary education, carpentry, soap making and religious counselling respectively are measures capable of reducing recidivism.

Ndubueze,⁸ identified contemporary critical issues in offender's rehabilitation in 21st Century Nigeria which include the relationship between risk factors and treatment or recidivism, offenders' perception of risk factors for themselves and for others, lack of awareness and consideration of the rehabilitative needs of offenders with special needs, different perceptions of punishment by offenders, non-differentiation of correctional programs for adult and juveniles, gaps in the rehabilitation of juveniles. The author pointed out that to solve these issues there is a need for periodic appraisal of corrections programmes in Nigeria to identify gaps and address them and that there is a need for correctional facilities in Nigeria to adopt in practical terms the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) approach to rehabilitation which is argued will ensure that the fundamental objective of rehabilitating different categories of offenders, especially those with special needs such as juveniles, pregnant/nursing mothers, old people etc. is achieved in the most effective and efficient manner.⁹

4.0 Research Method

This research work adopted the doctrinal approach. It relied on both primary and secondary sources of information or data. Primarily, it utilises a legal approach using primary data such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act and the Nigeria Correctional Service Act. The secondary sources of data utilised include textbooks, online articles in learned journals, relevant materials from the Internet, and other Lecture Series, Dissertations, Magazines, Newspapers, other Periodicals, Dictionaries and Reports. All data collected were subjected to content and contextual analysis.

5.0 Rehabilitation of Drug Offenders in Nigeria's Criminal Justice System

Rehabilitation of drug offenders in Nigeria's criminal justice system involves various strategies and programs aimed at reducing recidivism and helping offenders reintegrate into society as productive, and law-abiding citizens. Nigeria faces significant challenges related to drug abuse and trafficking, and its approach to drug offender rehabilitation includes imprisonment, drug treatment programs which involve counselling, psycho-educational programs, and support and

<https://publications.jostar.org.ng/sites/default/files/2023-12/FROM%20PRISON%20TO%20SOCIETY.pdf>
accessed 8 October 2024.

⁷ Akanji, T. A., Oladejo, O. A., and Alayande, A. F., 'Rehabilitation programmes, recidivism and internal security: a case study of Agodi and Abologo correctional facilities, Oyo State, Nigeria' (2018) *ResearchGate*

⁸ Ndubueze, P. N., 'Critical issues in offenders' rehabilitation in the 21st century Nigeria' (2020)4 (1) *Journal of Social Sciences*

⁹ *Ibid*

control. Also, educational and vocational programmes are employed to empower the inmates and help them achieve a high level of functioning when they are eventually released back into society.

Drug abuse in Nigeria being a country of over 400 different ethnic and religious groups and multicultural makeup is seen within a larger framework. For example, most societies do not view the use of certain medications as drug abuse as long as it does not result in overt behavioural changes. The public, police, preachers, educators, medical experts, parents, regulatory organisations, and educators all consistently voice their concerns about the rising rate of drug abuse in Nigeria, despite the country's multicultural population.¹⁰

Imprisonment is one of the punitive measures inflicted on drug offenders in Nigeria, thus, persons who illegally import, manufacture, produce, process, plant, or grow cocaine, LSD, heroin, or similar drugs without lawful authority are guilty of an offence and can face life imprisonment including those that also export, transport, sell, or deal in these drugs. Those who knowingly possess or use these drugs, whether by smoking, inhaling, or injecting, are also guilty of an offence and can face imprisonment for up to 25 years.

The rehabilitation of drug offenders in Nigeria is a process that starts with the arrest of the offender, investigation, institution of criminal proceedings at the Federal High Court,¹¹ conviction, sentencing and imprisonment if such offender is sentenced to imprisonment. While it is encouraged that an offender be punished for their offence, it is also quite important that such offenders go through processes that make them fit for release into society after they have served their sentence and this can be seen through the deployment of some rehabilitation tools used by the Correctional Services and the Juvenile Homes such as Counselling, public sensitisation, special programs such as National Drug Control Master Plan 2021 – 2025 which aim to achieve total abstinence and no evidence of drug substitution treatment, the strategy is based on a four-pillar model and its overall aims are to: prioritise collaboration and consultation; address the differences between law enforcement and drug demand reduction; work alongside leading agencies to ensure effective management and implementation of the strategy; and promote monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy.¹²

Nigeria is home to a large number of rehabilitation facilities designed to address the pervasive problem of substance misuse which include the Nigerian Correctional Service which was passed into law in 2019¹³ for the rehabilitation of offenders, the Nigerian Correctional Service was transformed from the Nigerian Prison Service with the main aim of reforming offenders and not just to punish them, hence the change in nomenclature. These facilities are essential for the rehabilitation of offenders including addicts and substance abusers, raising community awareness, and formulating strategies to address the nation's drug misuse crisis. There are also other establishments, with wide variations in these centres' offerings, prices, and intended audiences, however, these centres are private rehabilitation centres to be paid for by the drug offender who intends to be rehabilitated.¹⁴

Even after the Nigerian Correctional Service bill was passed into law in 2019 and rehabilitation concepts gained popularity in offender management globally, the Nigerian Correctional Service has not yet fully transitioned into a correctional facility. The Nigerian Correctional Service has

¹⁰ Jatau A.I. *et. al.*, (2021) 'The Burden of Drug Abuse in Nigeria: A Scoping Review of Epidemiological Studies and Drug Laws' 42 *Public Health Rev.*

¹¹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) Section 249-251

¹² National Drug Control Master Plan 2021-2025

https://www.unodc.org/conig/uploads/documents/NDCMP_2021-2025.pdf accessed 8 October 2024

¹³ Nigeria Correctional Service Act, 2019

¹⁴ Rehab Path 'Rehab Centres in Nigeria (2024) <https://rehab.africa/location/nigeria/> accessed 8 October 2024

a history of having a high recidivism rate, this is evident in the report of the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics in a study carried out by Oyewo,¹⁵ that out of the 11,930 prisoners found guilty in Nigerian jails in 2015, 6,447 (or 56.6%) were first-time offenders. 2,951 prisoners, or 24.7% of the total number of convicted prisoners, were found guilty a second time, while 1,469 and 5,36 prisoners, or 12.3% and 4.5% of the total number of convicted prisoners, were found guilty a third and fourth time, respectively. The high rate of recidivism suggests that Nigerian correctional facilities are not successful in achieving rehabilitation.

Despite the robust provisions of the laws prohibiting the use of drugs, the punitive measurements and the rehabilitative methods employed by the Correctional services, studies have revealed that the rate of recidivism has not reduced as expected and this has been identified to be due to socio-economic and cultural factors.

6.0 Legal and Institutional Framework

The major legal framework for the rehabilitation of offenders generally in Nigeria is the Nigeria Correctional Service Act and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, while the framework for the rehabilitation of drug abuse offenders is the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act, the jurisdiction for the prosecution of drug abuse offenders is conferred on the Federal High Court of Nigeria.¹⁶ The purpose of the NDLEA Act is the establishment of an agency to enforce laws against the cultivation, processing, sale, trafficking and use of hard drugs and to empower the Agency to investigate persons suspected of having dealings in drugs and other related matters. It is empowered to arrest and prosecute offenders, this is the duty conferred on the prosecution unit of the Agency as provided by the Act.¹⁷

The Act established a counselling unit which is saddled with the responsibility of collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health have responsibility for campaigns, seminars and workshops aimed at educating the public on the danger of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, thereby stimulating interest in and awareness about drug-related problems; after-care rehabilitation, social reintegration and education of addicts; and the promotion of the welfare of convicts. Based on the provisions of the NDLEA Act on the establishment of the Prosecution and counselling units, it can be inferred that the aim of the Agency is not just to punish drug offenders but to rehabilitate such offenders.

Also, beyond the provision of custody and confinement of inmates based on court sentence, the Nigerian Correctional Service Centre and Borstal Homes have the responsibility to identify the existence and causes of anti-social behaviours of inmates; conduct risk and needs assessments aimed at developing appropriate correctional treatment methods for reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration; implement reformation and rehabilitation programs to enhance the reintegration of inmates back into the society; initiate behaviour modification in inmates through the provision of medical, psychological, spiritual, and counselling services for all offenders including violent extremists; and to empower inmates through the deployment of educational and vocational skills training programs, and facilitating incentives and income generation through Custodial Centres, farms, and industries.¹⁸ (Nigeria Correctional Service). Therefore, the concept of rehabilitation of offenders in general and drug offenders specifically

¹⁵ Oyewo, O. O., 'Inmate rehabilitation idea and the challenges of policy implementation in the Nigerian Correctional Centres' (2023) (3) 3 *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance*.

¹⁶ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999, Section 251

¹⁷ Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act, CAP N30, LFN 2004

¹⁸ Nigeria Correctional Service, 'Mandate/Functions of the Nigeria Correctional Service' (2024) <https://www.corrections.gov.ng/page/about-ncos/mandate/functions?menu_id=2&sub_id=19> accessed 6 October 2024

in not foreign to the instrumentality of law in Nigeria, however, the problem lies in the implementation of the wordings of the law and the policies that support those laws.

6.1 Available Rehabilitation Mechanisms

The goal of rehabilitation is to try to change the offenders since it is believed that by giving them training programs, they will be able to have more fulfilling lives after being released from prison. Because of the lack of rehabilitation programs and the horrible experiences that criminals endure, custodial centres in Nigeria continue to treat convicts like travesties. "In general, life in Nigerian correctional facilities is extremely regimented to the point where inmates' activities are strictly regulated." This type of treatment usually leaves prisoners in a state of complete mental and physical destruction, which finally leads to their destruction and unfit for re-entry into society.¹⁹ The devastating state of the treatment nonetheless, there are still a handful of mechanisms put in place albeit non-functional and non-effective, for the rehabilitation of offenders and they include: psychological and counselling service; educational and vocational training programs, religious and moral instructions, work programs, sport and recreation, and legal aid services.²⁰

Where inmates are not effectively rehabilitated through skill development and capacity building, they typically return to society as resolute adversaries. An ex-convict like this frequently feels oppressed rather than disciplined, which renders them full of vengeance and with the will to revenge their punishment. Furthermore, an ex-inmate of this kind is probably more damaging than beneficial to a society that is universally seen as an oppressive structure. This weakness largely explains why so many formerly incarcerated people become recidivists. Reducing the steadily rising rate of recidivism may be possible with successful rehabilitation and reformation along with appropriate community reintegration follow-up. Regretfully, studies have repeatedly demonstrated that most prisoners do not successfully rehabilitate while incarcerated, and the majority of ex-inmates especially drug offenders return to their usual life of drug use.

7.0 Challenges of Rehabilitation

Limited resources pose a significant challenge to the rehabilitation of drug offenders in several ways, examples of which are inadequacy of facilities and infrastructure, overcrowded prisons which strain existing facilities, making it difficult to provide adequate space for rehabilitation programs and eventually lead to an environment that is not conducive to recovery and personal development, lack of specialised facilities which is evident in the lack dedicated spaces for rehabilitation activities such as counselling rooms, therapy centres, or vocational training workshops specifically designed for drug rehabilitation in many prisons, limited program availability; rehabilitation programs, especially those that are specialised for drug offenders, require significant funding for materials, qualified personnel, and infrastructure. Without adequate funding, the scope and quality of available programs are limited.²¹

There also exists the problem of a shortage of trained personnel, a lack of qualified professionals is often a shortage of staff who are specifically trained in addiction treatment and rehabilitation. This can result in generic and less effective rehabilitation programs that do not

¹⁹ Ayuk, A. A., & Okpa, J. T., (2022) 'Predictors hampering treatment of offenders in Nigeria's Custodian Centres' *Interchopen*, DOI: 10.5772/intechopen.106425.

²⁰ The Nigerian Legal Aid Act, 2011

²¹ Obioha, Emeka E. "Challenges and reforms in the Nigerian prisons system." (2011) 27 (2) *Journal of Social Sciences*, 95-109.

adequately address the specific needs of drug offenders. Effective rehabilitation requires trained professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and medical staff.²² Another identifiable challenge is insufficient access to treatment by inmates, which causes limited medical and psychological services: required by drug offenders for medical and psychological treatment, including detoxification, therapy, and ongoing medical care and inadequate drug treatment programs or specialised drug treatment programs, such as methadone maintenance therapy or cognitive-behavioural therapy, require significant investment. The lack of supportive resources such as educational and vocational training and reintegration support and inadequate monitoring and evaluation is another major challenge to the success of rehabilitation of drug offenders.²³ Effective rehabilitation includes providing inmates with skills and education to support their reintegration into society, post-release support services, such as halfway houses, job placement programs, and continued counselling, are also critical for the successful reintegration of drug offenders while inadequate monitoring and evaluation breeds lack of program evaluation and poor data collection. Insufficient capacity to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs makes it difficult to assess outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and implement evidence-based practice. Furthermore, effective rehabilitation relies on good data to track progress and outcomes.²⁴ The Problem of failure in the rehabilitation attempt for drug offenders is traceable to overcrowded prisons, this challenge puts a strain on facilities and resources causing insufficient living space for the inmates with the likelihood of exacerbating stress and tension among inmates. Overcrowded prisons also overburden the infrastructure as facilities such as dining halls, bathrooms, and recreational areas become overcrowded, making it difficult to maintain hygiene, safety, and comfort. A natural consequence of overcrowding is that it leads to limited access to rehabilitation programs such as counselling, vocational training, and educational classes which often have limited capacity, it can also mean a reduction in the quality of program as staff are spread too thin to provide individualised attention and support.²⁵ Tension and competition for limited resources can lead to increased violence and unrest among inmates, creating an unsafe environment that hinders rehabilitation efforts. This often leads to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among inmates. These mental health issues can be particularly detrimental to drug offenders, who may already be struggling with psychological problems related to addiction while some inmates may retire into social isolation due to less opportunity for meaningful social interaction and support, which are crucial for successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

Overcrowded prisons often struggle to provide adequate pre-release programs and support, making it more difficult for inmates to transition successfully back into society. The strain on resources extends to post-release services, which are essential for preventing recidivism. Stigmatization and discrimination of offenders post-release present significant barriers to successful reintegration into society. These challenges can undermine the rehabilitation process and increase the risk of recidivism. It generally culminates into employment challenges such as job application bias and the reluctance to hire individuals with criminal records by many employers, leading to high unemployment rates among ex-offenders. Even when hired, ex-

²² *Ibid*

²³ Ahmed, A. M. & Ahmad, A. H., 'Prison, Stigma, Discrimination and Personality as Predictors of Criminal Recidivism: Preliminary Findings' (2015) 6 (12) *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, 20-30.

²⁴ Opafunso, Z. O. & Adepoju, O. O., 'Prison reforms system and inmates' welfare in Nigeria' (2016) 7 (1) *Arts and Social Science Journal*, p.166

²⁵ Ajah, B. O. & Nweke, J. O., 'Challenges facing Vocational Training of Prison Inmates in Nigeria: A Study of Abakaliki and Awka Prisons' (2017) 73 (5) *Ponte: International Journal of Sciences and Research*, 32-48.

offenders often find themselves in low-paying, insecure jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Also, ex-offenders often face rejection and negative perceptions from community members, making it difficult to rebuild social networks and relationships while family relationships can be strained or severed due to the stigma associated with having a member who has been incarcerated, some landlords may refuse to rent to ex-offenders, resulting in difficulties finding stable housing and consequentially to homelessness.²⁶

The inability to secure employment and stable housing significantly increases the likelihood of reoffending while some ex-offenders might revert to substance abuse or criminal behaviour as coping mechanisms.

Corruption is a paramount challenge when it comes to the rehabilitation of offenders in Nigeria. A significant ill of corruption is that it incites political animosity, which in turn fuels social insurgency and, frequently, military takeovers. The inmate rehabilitation program is being implemented in light of these realities and the consequences of corruption. The most crucial point is that corruption arises from poverty and is a direct result of it. There is a two-way relationship between poverty and crime. There are several forms of corruption, such as bribery, defined as a payment or gift provided or received in a degenerate relationship, either in cash or in kind. These include payoffs, tips, kickbacks, sweeteners, lubricating palms, and so forth and embezzlement, which is the robbery of open assets by open authorities. It is the point at which a prison official takes from inmate feeding, material, etc²⁷

8.0 Conclusion

The study found that the treatment of drug offenders in Nigeria is more of punishment rather than rehabilitation and although there are robust provisions for the employment of rehabilitation methods for the treatment of drug offenders, the punitive measure outweighs the rehabilitative measures which are being hindered by a number of challenges ranging from limited resources, overcrowded prisons, corruption and stigmatisation of ex-inmates.

The rehabilitation of drug offenders within Nigeria's criminal justice system is critical for promoting public safety, reducing recidivism, and fostering a just and equitable society. Despite the significant challenges, such as limited resources, overcrowded prisons, stigmatization, lack of evidence-based practices, socio-economic disparities, inadequate reintegration support, and cultural attitudes, there is a clear path forward to enhance rehabilitation efforts.

9.0 Recommendations

In order to give effect to the provisions of the legal mechanisms for rehabilitation of drug offenders, it is imperative that the government explore alternative punishment methods as imprisonment has proven to breed recidivism more than it produces reformed individuals.

Also, addressing the issue of overcrowded prisons requires a diverse approach, including sentencing reforms, and implementing alternative sentencing for non-violent offenders, such as community service, probation, or house arrest, to reduce the prison population. Investing in and expanding rehabilitation programs to ensure all inmates have access to the services they need, building new facilities or expanding existing ones to accommodate the inmate population more comfortably and strengthening reintegration programs to support inmates as they transition back into society, reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

The problem of stigmatisation and discrimination of offenders post-release can be solved by public awareness education to change the perceptions of the citizenry by educating the public

²⁶ Ahmed, A. M. & Ahmad, A. H., *Op.cit.*

²⁷ Aliyu K., Mustaffa J., and Nasir, N., 'Issues Affecting the Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Programme in Oke Kura Prison, Kwara State, Nigeria' (2017) 8 (10) *IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences*.

about the challenges faced by ex-offenders and the importance of supporting their reintegration, **Highlighting Success Stories:** Sharing stories of successful reintegration can challenge negative stereotypes and demonstrate the potential for change. Government should strive to regulate policies that remove questions about criminal history from job applications as this can improve employment prospects for ex-offenders and strengthen laws against discrimination in housing, employment, and education. Business owners should be encouraged to employ ex-inmate by offering tax incentives by way of tax credits and subsidies and recognising and rewarding businesses that actively support the reintegration of ex-offenders.