

## EXAMINING PRISON EDUCATION AND RECIDIVISM IN NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES: THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) REMEDY

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**ABSTRACT:** *The exclusion of inmates from the use of ICTs and the internet can only continue to be counterproductive and promotes the cyclic return of discharged inmates. 394 National Open University of Nigeria inmate students are excluded from the benefits of online learning due to the security protocols as a result of the policy on the prohibition of internet usage by inmates. Nigerian Correctional Service data between 2013-2017 was employed; quantitative methods were employed for the study. The study revealed that men were significantly more likely to recidivate than women (48% versus 19%). Also that out of the 394 registered inmate students in NOUN, 94.7% had only Ordinary level (O'level) as their highest qualifications and only 17 had graduated. The result alluded to the fact that increased engagement through online learning would not only result to improved enrollment and performance, it would equally reduce recidivist crimes in Nigerian Correctional Centres.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Open and Distance Learning, inmates, recidivism, Nigerian Correctional Service*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is an Open and Distance learning (ODL) institution that has 78 study centers spread all over Nigeria including nine (9) special centers for inmate students and facilitates most of its courses to students online. With this mode of learning all NOUN inmate students of about 394 (see table 4) were left out of online facilitation since there is prohibited access to internet by inmates [15][16].

NOUN's training of inmate students in various prisons across the country is systematically geared towards the award of university degrees, certificates and diplomas in several disciplines. The standards and the curriculum of education and training in NOUN for prison inmates are the same as those in regular educational institutions. The nine study centers within the prison yards have desktops and laptop computers donated by NOUN and other agencies for learning, though, not adequate [21].

NOUN's objectives in sponsoring the education of Nigerian correctional inmates include: (1) To reduce

the rate of crime in Nigeria, (2) to easily re-integrate and increase the employability of inmates after serving their jail terms, and (3) to reduce boredom, conflict with prison staff, misbehavior and violence during the jail term. Prisoners who had studied through distance learning had increased cognitive ability and new pro-social thinking patterns, giving them the ability to express themselves more effectively and negotiate agreed outcomes without having to resort to violence [9][23]. However, this rare opportunity by NOUN will reduce crime, save funds and make communities safer [10][20]. Thus, engaging in higher levels of education provides powerful cognitive and social learning which is fundamental to the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model of rehabilitation [1]. This novel initiative by NOUN (especially with 100% scholarship granted to the student- inmates) has gained huge acceptance with increasing number of yearly enrollments and already 17 graduates across different fields (table 5). However, considering the huge number of inmates across the correctional centres as well as the few number of enrollments, questions are being asked: (a) why is NOUN having poor inmate enrollment despite its free scholarship scheme for Nigerian inmates? (b) Compared to the number of enrollment, what percentage have successfully graduated from the programme and why? (c) Can the introduction of technology improve enrollment, performance and recidivism?

This work investigated the current realities in the Nigerian Correctional Centres with respect to inmate education 2013-2017 with a view to identifying the reason responsible for poor enrollment, graduation and recidivism on the part of the inmates. Understanding of such realities would in no small measure necessitate the provision of appropriate models that would mitigate such challenges either through policy decisions or implementation of ICT based solutions that would guarantee inclusiveness for national growth. It would also assist in reducing recidivism and the promotion of a crime free society.

## 2. RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1. Education in Prison and Employment

Education leads to a society of individuals with strong minds and morals. Providing educational services to inmates' benefit society and are cost-effective for the state. Education while in prison promotes easier re-entry into the community, encourages success outside of prison, creates employability, reduces future crime and adds to the development of the local community where the ex-convict resides [17]. Inmates who receive an education in the form of academic instruction or vocational training are more likely to gain employment upon release; they have a significant less probability of recidivating. The actual skill learned in correctional education enhances the chances of post released employment, leading in theory, to a reduced likelihood of recidivism [2]. Incarceration disproportionately affects the young and the under-educated; many released offenders lack the education and basic job skills it takes to seamlessly reintegrate into society [10]. For example, a meta-analysis conducted on relevant studies published between 1990 and 1999 demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between post-secondary correctional education and recidivism [24]. At the level of basic education, as many researchers outlined, that there is a strong correlation between illiteracy/innumeracy, social marginality, offending and re-offending. [22] suggested that reinvestment in prison educational and vocational programs is warranted and that improving the educational and employment prospects of inmates while in prison may help to equip inmates for life outside the prison walls. Unemployment rates appear to directly correspond with levels of education. According the [8], the unemployment rate is highest for individuals who have O'level and lowest for individuals who hold a bachelors or higher degrees. With or without educational attainment, employment prospects of offenders are already weak. One theory is that

prison educational achievement increases the likelihood of employment, which in turn decreases the likelihood of recidivism. Post release employment keeps offenders occupied and provides them with a disincentive to engage in offending.

### 2.2. Recidivism

Recidivism is the return to prison for any cause including convictions on new criminal charges.. Generally, young males imprisoned for property offenses and who have extensive records of offending are the most likely to return to crime (e.g. [3][4][5][6][7][12][13][14][18][25][26]).

Table 1: Mean Comparison of Men and Women (inmates) using Chi-square [19]

Variables	Males (N = 516)	Females (N = 80)	t or $\chi^2$ Values
Age (years)	37.48	35.38	1.82
Race (non-White)	56%	44%	4.33*
Unemployment (yes)	34%	33%	0.03
Children present (yes)	31%	19%	4.66*
Former relationship (yes)	40%	39%	0.05
Severe (yes)	37%	23%	6.10*
Alcohol (yes)	34%	13%	13.93***
Drug (yes)	49%	23%	17.94***
History of probation or parole (yes)	59%	31%	21.12***
Dual arrest (yes)	3%	11%	12.45***
Recidivate (yes)	48%	19%	22.58***

\*p < .05. \*\*\*p < .001.

According to a 5 year study by ([MAG09]), Men are also significantly more likely to recidivate than women (48% versus 19%).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The data examined in the study were drawn from prison records within Nigerian Correctional Service prisons, the inmates from the Nigerian Correctional Service have been the population of this research. Within the year 2013 to 2017 of Nigerian Correctional Service statistics. 737, 765 people were in Nigerian Correctional Service prisons with 95.1% of males and 3.8% of females and 131,858 recidivate However, our sample with 394 inmate students comprised 0.053% of the total.

Table 2: Statistical Data on Recidivism by Nigerian Correctional Services (2013 – 2017)

S/N	Year	TOTAL	GENDER		RECIDIVISM												Total of RECIDIVISM M+F	% OF RECIDIVISM
					2 <sup>ND</sup>		3 <sup>RD</sup>		4 <sup>TH</sup>		5 <sup>TH</sup>		6 <sup>TH</sup>		7 <sup>TH</sup>			
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
1	2013	158898	151052	7844	11653	250	7168	123	4476	79	3011	52	825	24	635	27	28317	17.8
2	2014	138842	132008	6834	14510	551	7907	209	4476	92	2330	56	1009	21	799	9	31969	23.1
3	2015	124785	118136	6649	6600	200	3061	82	1640	34	706	6	374	5	80	0	12788	10.2
4	2016	142848	136481	6367	6312	205	3269	190	2140	52	1209	16	444	8	527	20	14392	10.1
5	2017	172392	164243	8149	20476	702	10121	373	6817	257	3038	116	1538	53	890	11	44392	25.8
6	Total	737765	701920	27843	59551	1908	31526	977	19549	514	10294	246	4190	111	2931	67	131858	87%



Fig 1: 2013 – 2017 % of Recidivism in Nigerian Correctional Services Using Clustered Column (Authors)

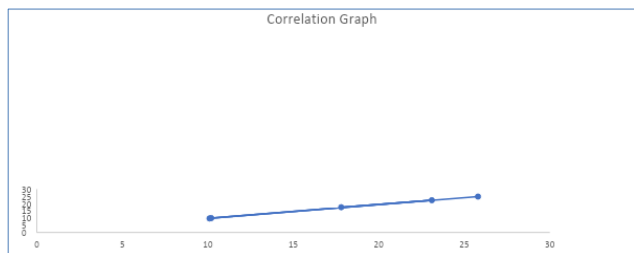


Fig 2: Graph showing Correlation of +1 (Correlation)

Table 3: % of Recidivism against % of Male Recidivism for Correlation

% of Recidivism (column1)	% of Male Recidivism (column 2)
17.8	17.48
23.1	22.35
10.2	9.96
10.1	9.73
25.8	24.87

Table 4: Statistical Data of NOUN Inmate Students with Qualifications

S/NO	Special study center	No of inmate students	Gender		Faculties										Average Age	Highest qualification					
			M	F	A G R I C	A R T S	E D U	H E A L T H S C I	L A W	M G T	S C I E N C E S	S O C I O L O G Y	O'L	NCE		HND	B.Sc	PGD	MSc		
1	ABEOKUTA	32	31	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	3	24	38.62	31	0	0	1	0	0	
2	AWKA	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	30.5	2	0	0	0	0	0		
3	ENUGU	70													66	2	0	1	1	0	
4	KADUNA	39	39	0	0	2	4	1	0	4	10	18	31.4	36	0	2	1	0	0		
5	KEFFI	43	43	0	0	0	2	1	0	6	6	28	27.93	41			1		1		
6	KIRIKIRI (Lagos)	84	74	10	1	0	3	0	2	24	5	49	38.84	79	0	3	2	1	0		
7	KUJE	73	73	0	0	0	2	0	1	5	3	62	30.75	71	0	0	1	1	0		
8	LAFIA	5	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	34.2	4	1	0	0	0	0		
9	PORTHARCOURT	46	35	11	0	2	1	0	1	12	3	26	34.8	43	1	1	1	0	0		
	TOTAL	394																			

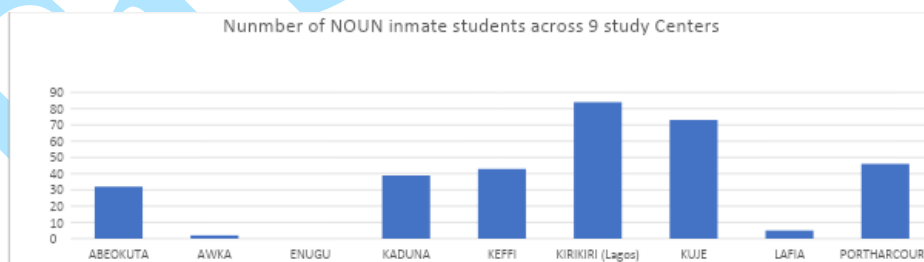


Fig 2: Number of NOUN Inmate students across 9 study centers

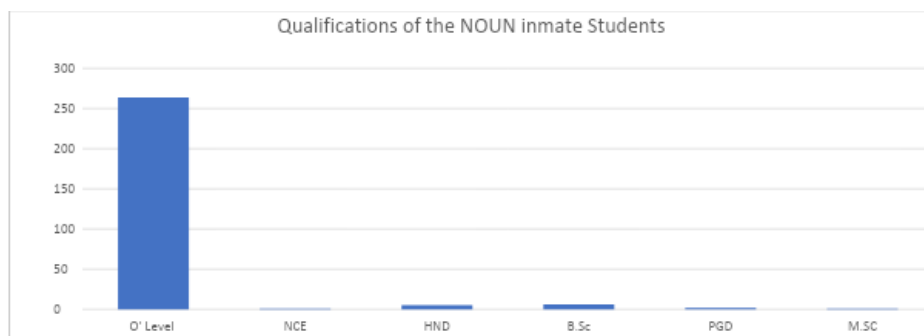


Fig 3: Qualifications of NOUN inmate Students

Table 5: NOUN Inmates Graduates across the Study Centers and Faculties

S/NO	Special study center	No of inmate students	Gender		Faculties								Degree		
			M	F	A G R I C	A R T S	E D U	H E A L T H S C I	L A W	M G T	S C I E N C E S	S O C I O L O G Y	First Degree	Second Degree	
1	ABEOKUTA														
2	AWKA	2	2	0							1	1	1	1	
3	ENUGU														
4	KADUNA														
5	KEFFI														
6	KIRIKIRI (Lagos)	9	9	0	1					2		6	9	0	
7	KUJE														
8	LAFIA														
9	PORT HARCOURT	6	5	1		1				3		2	6	0	
	TOTAL	17	16	1	1	1				5	1	9	16	1	

#### 4. Locally recorded version of Online Facilitation

Locally recorded version gives the opportunity to save each facilitated course on the desktop device. The files can be collated and saved into a folder and each zoom file can be labeled with the date, time, meeting name, course code and course title. By default, these folders are inside the Zoom folder, located inside the documents folder on Windows. Box allows you to upload the entire recording folder by dragging and dropping it into the Box window, making this the most convenient option (see Fig 4).



Fig 4: A flowchart of the activities of Local drive recording (Source: Authors)

#### 5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

- From tables 1 & 2 and figure 2 – The correlation for the percentage of the total recidivism (variable1) against the percentage of male recidivism (variable 2) was +1 (see Fig 2). This reveals that it was a perfect positive correlation which means that the correlation was very strong and it disclosed that the variables were directly

related, which means that as the value of one variable goes up, the value of the other also tends to do so.

- From table 4 the total number of NOUN inmate students was 394 and the highest qualifications of the inmate students were Ordinary level (O' level) with 94.7%. This revealed that most inmate students' highest qualifications were O' level.

- From table 5: As at date, 17 inmates across different fields have graduated from NOUN, 16 with first degree and 1 with second degree.
- From Fig:4, the converted records will be saved into a folder for future use and if the idea is adopted, there will be enhancement in the inmate students' learning.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This study revealed that the correlation between the % of male recidivism and the % of recidivism of the Nigerian Correctional Service was +1, which means that there was a direct relationship between them, this result was in agreement with [19] which stated that the men were significantly more likely to recidivate than were women (48% versus 19%).

The study also disclosed that the highest qualifications of most registered NOUN inmate students were O' level, which is the least of the qualifications in Nigeria, with deficits in education, employment, and housing as well as the lack of treatment programs pose significant barriers to the successful reentry of inmates released from prison, this was in agreement with [24] which stated that there was a strong correlation between the level of basic education and the illiteracy/innumeracy, social marginality, offending and re-offending.

With the 17 graduates from NOUN, a post secondary institution, the rate of their recidivating may be slim; this was supported by a meta-analysis conducted on relevant studies published between 1990 and 1999 demonstrated that there was a positive correlation between post-secondary correctional education and recidivism [24].

## CONCLUSION

The work examined the current situation at the Nigerian Correctional Centres in ten study centres where NOUN established their institutional study centres. As a group of persons secluded through government policies for punitive or correctional purposes, the inmates if not properly managed may serve as a training ground where crimes are initiated, nurtured and executed.

The result of this study that the highest qualifications of the inmate students were Ordinary level (O' level) with 94.7% - has great implications for the government whose main responsibility is the maintenance of law and order as well as the security of lives and property. The analysed data revealed that (48% versus 19%) the male inmates are more likely to recidivate than their female counterpart. Equally, important is the fact that only a few NOUN inmates have so far graduated successfully. It

implies that more need to be done to ensure that the student inmate are at par with their regular counterpart considering the inmates have the luxury of time.

## Future research

Future research should consider the introduction of appropriate ICT based models and technologies that fit the existing government policies that would promote inclusiveness, equality, active participation of inmates.

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