Conditions and Congestion Level amongst Correctional Services in the Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author NCO design the study, performed the data analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors OPA and KAA reviewed the first draft of the manuscript and helped with the revisions. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aims: To examine the Nigerian Correctional Service Condition and Congestion level in the Selected States in the Niger Delta Region.
Study Design: Cross sectional survey design.
Place and Duration of Study: The study was carried out in selected states and location of correctional service in Niger Delta Region which include Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom States between December 2017 and September 2018.
Methodology: Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting Three Hundred and Eighty-Seven (387) inmates using the Taro Yarmane Formular from the population of Eleven Thousand Six Hundred and Thirty-Five (11,635). Primary and Secondary data were used for this study. Primary data were obtained through the administration of questionnaire. The set of questionnaires was administered to inmates to elicit information on the facilities and comfortability

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of the prison and the welfare service available. The secondary source of information that were employed included relevant official publications and records from Nigerian Correctional Service, journal articles, periodicals and internet sources. Frequency, percentage, tables were used in presenting information on Demographic Characteristics of respondents. The hypotheses were tested using the Chi Square Statistical tool.

Results: The result of the study showed that the selected prisons are highly congested in capacity as against the actual capacity.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the selected prisons are congested and the inmate's welfare are inefficient and ineffective.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria over the years has made tremendous progress on political, economic and social reforms, but inspite of all these Nigeria's correctional service are least considered and are yet to make appreciable impact on the welfare of the inmates [1]. A recurring debate within contemporary academic circles of criminologists, social workers and prison experts is to institute an appropriate template for proper prison administration that will reflect its objectives.

Even though crime and other vices need to be deterred, it should be to the extent that its application is unreasonable to the inmates during and after imprisonment. It is therefore needful to be logical and rational in meted out punishment. According to Achu [2] crime that produces pleasure must be counteracted by pain such as imprisonment, but this must be done reasonably and in line with standard prison practices which include the welfare of the imprisoned while in prison.

Nigeria correctional service are "Living Hell" twenty to thirty inmates arrive at the prison every day, thus over-crowding the reformatory structure which does not even exist in the true sense, often times tripling the original carrying capacity. For instance, Port Harcourt Correctional service in Rivers State with a capacity for 804 inmates but now are in excess of 4,188 [3]. There are shortages of bed spaces for only half of the inmates sleep on bed. Disease is widespread; Correctional service cells are unclean and offer little ventilation resulting in unhealthy and dangerous sanitary conditions [4].

Correctional service and detention conditions remain harsh and life threatening in the Nigerian prison custody.

Correctional service inmates are allowed outside their cells for recreation or exercise irregularly and many inmates provide their own food, only those with money or whose relatives provide food regularly had sufficient food. Petty corruption among prison officials makes it difficult for money provided for food to reach the prisoners and poor inmates often relied on hand-out from others to survive. These unwholesome treatments have contributed to the death of numerous prisoners [5].

There is more to imprisonment than opening and closing of prison gate to throw in convicts. Modern penal management techniques emphasized not only reformation and rehabilitation of the inmates but also the application of the term correction, to reflect inmates or convicts change in attitude and the decongestion of prisons.

According to a recent report by [6] more than three of every five Correctional service inmates in Nigeria have not been convicted of any offence, instead they wait years for their trial in appalling conditions. This fact was corroborated by the immediate past Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Correctional Services (NPS). Mr. Olusola Ogundipe in the year 2012, who while testifying during a public hearing on the proposed prisons amendment bill revealed that pre-trial detainees now constitute about 80 percent of the prison population. Most of them are actually held for minor offences, for which bail is available. He added that many of the detainees, there have no case files. On the premise of the above, this study therefore is posed to provide answers to the following: Are there adequate spacious structure equipped enough to guarantee the good health of these defaulters? Would these offenders be subjected to correctional measures to change to be better citizens upon release? These issues pose a serious challenge to our prisons and the effects these have on the welfare of the inmates.

The specific objectives will be addressed:

I. Assess the real conditions of the correctional service in the selected States;
II. To examine the congestion level amongst the selected correctional service

The Research Hypotheses Postulated for this Study are:

1. There is a statistically significant impact of correctional service congestion on inmate's welfare.
2. There is a statistically significant difference in the current number of inmates and the actual capacity of inmates in the selected correctional service.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Ifowodo [7] defined a sample as a subset of the target population used for a study. Sample is seen as a portion of the population to be studied that is carefully selected to represent all the characteristic traits of the larger population from which data on the issues of interest are being collected so as to make valid generalized statements about the population [8].

Therefore, to determine the sample size for this study, Purposive sampling was used to select three States from six states in the Niger Delta region. The rationale behind the use of purposive sampling was as a result of in-depth interviews carried out by the researcher which indicated that Prisons found in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states are found to be experiencing high level of congestion based on available secondary data

from the Nigerian Prisons services (2017). To determine the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamane formula which [9] stated is a simplified form of the formula developed by the National Education Association was applied. The formula is given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(a)^2}$$

Where

n = sample size
N = population
a = level of significance, which is 0.05

$$n = \frac{11,635}{1 + 11,635\,(0.05)2}$$

$$n = 387$$

From the equation above, a total of 387 of the inmates were selected as the sample for the study. This is as shown in Table 1.

2.2 Sources of Data

Data for this work were from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained from the field specifically from structured questionnaire that was administered to the inmates. The questionnaire was designed to capture information from the inmates on the issues of interest to this study.

Secondary data sources entails information from gazette newspapers and other published sources.

Table 1. Correctional service population and sample size

State	Names of Correctional Service	Number of Inmates	Questionnaire distribution to the Total Sample size
Rivers	Port Harcourt	4402	146
	Degema	1256	42
	Elele	798	27
	Ahoada	543	18
Bayelsa	Okaka	2280	76
Akwa Ibom	Abak	387	13
	Eket	342	11
	Ikot Abasi	627	21
	Ikot Ekpene	1000	33
Total		**11,635**	**387**

Source: Present study

2.3 Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected with the aid of a questionnaire which was administered to the respondents to ascertain their views on the research aim. The questionnaire has two sections; section A which elicited information on socio demographics of the respondents and section B elicited information in line with the objectives of the study.

Copies of the questionnaire were given to the inmates through simple random sampling technique where the official calls the inmates to their hall and the researcher and assistants administered the questionnaire in no particular order, thereafter the questionnaire were retrieved from the inmates.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Question 1

What are the real conditions of the Correctional service in the selected states?

Table 2. showed the adequacy of facilities in the selected prisons for this study, from the table it is observed that on the adequacy of the facilities 182 inmates which represents 47.0% of the study population agreed that the facilities are adequate, 187 inmates representing 48.3% of the study population strongly agreed, 12 inmates representing 3.1% of the study population disagreed while 6 inmates representing 1.6% of the study population strongly disagreed.

Table 3. showed that on the issue of improvement in Correctional service conditions in recent times, 76 inmates from the selected prisons which represents 19.6% of the study population agreed, 91 inmates representing 23.5% of the study population strongly agreed, 148 inmates which constitutes 38.2% of the study population disagreed and 72 inmates representing 18.6% of the study population strongly disagreed.

Table 4. examined inmates' comfort with the number of persons in the prison ward. As shown on the table, 12 inmates representing 3.1% of the study population agreed that they are comfortable with the number of persons the prison ward, 23 inmates representing 6.0% of the study population as well strongly agreed that they are comfortable with the number of inmates in the prison wards. 117 inmates who represent 30.2% of the study population disagreed that they are comfortable with the number of persons with the number of inmates in the prison ward while 235 inmates representing 60.7% of the study population strongly disagreed that they are comfortable with the number of inmates in the prison ward.

Table 5. examined satisfaction with the level of comfort in the correctional service ward. As shown in the table 47 inmates who represent 12.1% of the study population agreed that they are satisfied with the level of comfort in the prison ward, 41 inmates who represent 10.6% of the study population strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the level of comfort in the prison ward. 162 inmates representing 41.9% of the study population disagreed that they are satisfied with the level of comfort in the correctional service ward and 137 inmates representing 35.4% of the study population disagreed that that they are satisfied with the level of comfort in the prison ward.

Table 6. shows the response of the inmates to the correctional service condition as been very good, as observed 7 inmates representing 1.9% of the study population agreed that the prison conditions is good, 5 inmates representing 1.7% of the study population strongly agreed, 197 inmates who represent 50.4% of the study population disagreed that the prison conditions were good and 178 respondents who represents 46.0% of the study population strongly disagreed that the prison condition is good.

Table 2. Adequacy of facilities in the selected Prisons

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Agree	182	47.0
Strongly Agree	187	48.3
Disagree	12	3.1
Strongly Disagree	6	1.6
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table 3. Improvement in correctional service conditions in recent times

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Agree	76	19.6
Strongly Agree	91	23.5
Disagree	148	38.2
Strongly Disagree	72	18.6
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table 4. Comfortability with the number of inmates in correctional service ward

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Agree	12	3.1
Strongly Agree	23	6.0
Disagree	117	30.2
Strongly Disagree	235	60.7
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table 5. Satisfaction with the level of comfort in the correctional service ward

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Agree	47	12.1
Strongly Agree	41	10.6
Disagree	162	41.9
Strongly Disagree	137	35.4
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table6. Response to the correctional service condition as been very good

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Agree	7	1.9
Strongly Agree	5	1.7
Disagree	197	50.4
Strongly Disagree	178	46.0
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table 7. Capacity of the correctional services

State	Names of Correctional Service	Current Number of inmates	Actual Capacity of inmates	Percentage Difference	Ranking in terms of Congestion
Rivers	Port Harcourt	4,402	804	81.7	1
	Degema	1,256	350	72.1	4
	Elele	798	200	74.1	2
	Ahoada	543	150	72.4	3
Bayelsa	Okaka	2280	750	67.1	5
Akwa Ibom	Abak	387	200	48.3	7
	Eket	342	124	64.9	6
	Ikot Abasi	627	400	36.2	9
	Ikot Ekpene	1000	614	38.6	8
Total		**11,635**	**3,592**		

Source: Present study

3.2 Research Question Two

Is the congestion level the same across the selected Correctional Service?

The capacity of the prisons as shown in Table 7. shows that Port Harcourt Correctional services had the highest number of inmates which is 4402 with its actual capacity been 804 the percentage difference in the number of inmates is 81.7%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in the Port Harcourt correctional service exceeds that actual capacity of the prison by 81.7% and is ranked the highest in terms of congestion.

Degema correctional service have at present a total of 1256 inmates with its actual capacity been 350. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 72.1%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in the Degema Correctional services exceeds the actual capacity of the correctional services by 72.1% and is ranked 4th in terms of congestion.

Elele Correctional service at present have a total of 798 inmates with its actual capacity of 200 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 74.1%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Elele correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the correctional service by 74.1% and is ranked 2nd in terms of congestion.

Ahoada Correctional service at present have a total of 543 inmates with its actual capacity of 150 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 72.4%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Ahoada correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the prison by 72.4% and is ranked 3rd in terms of congestion.

Okaka Correctional service at present have a total of 2280 inmates with its actual capacity of 750 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 67.1%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Okaka correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the correctional service by 67.1% and is ranked 5th in terms of congestion.

Abak correctional service at present have a total of 387 inmates with its actual capacity of 200 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 48.3%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Abak correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the prison by 48.3% and is ranked 7th in terms of congestion.

Eket Correctional service at present have a total of 342 inmates with its actual capacity of 124 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 64.9%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Eket correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the Correctional service by 64.9% and is ranked 6th in terms of congestion.

Ikot Abasi correctional service at present have a total of 627 inmates with its actual capacity of 400 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 36.2%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Ikot Abasi prison exceeds the actual capacity of the prison by 36.2% and is ranked 9th in terms of congestion.

Ikot Ekpene Correctional service at present have a total of 1000 inmates with its actual capacity of 614 inmates. The percentage difference in the number of inmates is 38.6%, this however shows that the present number of inmates in Ikot Ekpene Correctional service exceeds the actual capacity of the Correctional service by 38.6% and is ranked 9th in terms of congestion.

On the Inmate correctional service Status of the respondents as seen in Table 8. shows that majority of the respondents 77% (298) are awaiting trail inmates, 12% (45) are convicts, while the remaining 11% (44) have been given life sentences.

Table 8. Correctional service inmates status

Population characteristics	Frequency	Percentage%
Awaiting trial inmates	298	77
Convicts	45	12
Lifers	44	11
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

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Table 9. Number of years of incarceration of inmates

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
1 year	27	6.9
2-3 years	25	6.5
4-10 years	194	50.1
11 years and above	97	25.0
Life Imprisonment	43	11.1
Death sentence	1	0.3
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Years of incarceration of inmates as shown in Table 9. shows that 27 of the inmates who represent 6.9% of the study population have been incarcerated for one years, 25 inmates representing 6.5% of the study population have been incarcerated with 2-3 years, 194 inmates representing 50.1% of the study population agreed that they have been incarcerated for 4-10 years while 97 of the inmates representing 25.0% of the study population agreed that they have been incarcerated for a period of 11 years and more.

Life imprisonment and death sentence were agreed to by 43 and 1 inmate who represents 11.1 and 0.3% of the study population respectively.

Table 10. shows the causes of congestion in prisons, as observed from the table, 121 inmates representing 31.2% of the study population identified poor administration of criminal justice as a factor responsible for congestion in the prisons. 159 inmates representing 41.1% of the study population identified awaiting trial population as a cause of prisons congestion, delayed justice as a cause of congestions of prisons was agreed by 76 inmates representing 19.6% of the study population while abuse of arrest powers and bail condition by the police and inadequate legal aid facilities were identified by 12 and 19 inmates representing 3.1% and 5.0% of the study population respectively.

3.2.1 Hypothesis one

The first study hypothesis state thus;

H_0: There is no statistically significant impact of Correctional service congestion on inmate's welfare.
H_1: There is.
This was tested using the Chi-Square statistical tool. Table 11 was used.

df= n-1
= 4-1 = 3

The critical Chi Square value at 95% significant level against 3 degrees of freedom gives the value of 7.815. The calculated Chi Square value of 397.89 is greater than the critical Chi Square value of 7.815 hence we reject the null hypothesis of no statistically significant impact and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a statistically significant impact of correctional service congestion on inmate's welfare.

3.2.2 Hypothesis two

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the current number of inmates and the actual capacity of inmates in the selected correctional service.

H_1: There is.

Table 10. Causes of congestion in correctional service

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Poor Administration of Criminal Justice system	121	31.2
Awaiting trial Population	159	41.1
Delayed Justice	76	19.6
Abuse of arrest powers and bail condition by the police	12	3.1
Inadequate legal aid facilities	19	5.0
Total	**387**	**100**

Source: Present study

Table 11. **Chi-square analysis table for hypothesis testing**

Response	Observed	Expected	O-E	O-E^2	$\frac{O-E^2}{E}$
Strongly Agreed	269	96.75	172.25	29670.01	306.7
Agreed	102	96.75	5.25	27.56	0.285
Disagreed	7	96.75	-89.75	8055.1	83.3
Strongly disagreed	9	96.75	-87.75	7700.1	79.6
Total					397.89

Table 12. t test table for difference in the current number of inmates and the actual capacity of inmates in the selected prisons

	Current number of inmates	Actual capacity of inmates
Mean	1292.778	399.1111
Variance	1712948	69085.11
Observations	9	9
Pearson Correlation	0.825137	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	8	
t Stat	2.432922	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.041015	
t Critical two-tail	2.306004	

Decision: Since the calculated t statistic value of 2.432922 is greater than the critical value of 2.306004, this therefore implies that we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no statistically significant difference in the current number of inmates and the actual capacity of inmates in the selected prisons and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a statistically significant difference in the current number of inmates and the actual capacity of inmates in the selected prisons.

3.3 Discussion

3.3.1 Assess the real conditions of the prisons in the selected states

The Study examined the condition of the prison with respect to congestion. Several Indicators were measured in order to ascertain the condition of the prison with respect to congestion and they include wanting to know if the facilities are adequate, level of improvement and level of comfort.

Research shows that the issue of congestion that has caused the prison condition to be in jeopardy is mostly caused by awaiting trial inmates which a onetime President Olusegun Obasanjo described as In-human.

A critical assessment on the reasons behind the majority of the respondents having such opinion is based on the fact that there has been failure of several committee set up to improve the prison condition. These committees include

- The National Working group on Prison Reform and Decongestion 2005.
- The Inter-Ministerial Summit on the State of Remand Inmates in Nigeria's Prisons 2005
- Presidential Committee on Prison Reform and Rehabilitation 2006.
- The Presidential Commission on the Reforms of the administration of justice (PCRAJ) established 2006.
- The Committee on the Harmonization of Reports of Presidential Committee working on Justice Sector Reforms 2007.

The data is thus contrary to the findings of Aduba [4] who stated that the federal government has in the past few decades carried out remedial works on facilities in the Nigeria Prisons. Although his findings were based on the Premises that the Nigerian government allocates over #500,000,000 annually for projects to the Nigeria Prisons Across the country.

The issue of congestion has made the Nigeria Prisons to be faced with loads of issues, the conditions of the prison are poor most especially for Pretrial prisoners. Condition of the Prison with respect to congestion has been one of the most negative trends that has confronted the national

judicial system thus creating a need for urgent attention for the reform of Nigeria's Prisons.

Finally, the result of this study is contrary to the findings of Aduba [4] as it is evidently seen that currently Nigerian Prison facilities are in a dilapidated condition and it is important to state that congestion as it is linked to the steady rise of awaiting trial inmates will impact negatively on the facilities found in the prisons

3.3.2 Examine the congestion levels amongst the selected prisons

Several Scholars [5] have reiterated in his research findings that the constitution of Nigeria states that an Individual arrested on suspicion of being involved in a crime is presented not guilty until otherwise proven in a court of law that is competent. The individual arrested has the right to seek a counsel and is privileged against self-incrimination and should appear before a magistrate or other judicial official within a reasonable time or be released from custody two or three month from the date of being arrested. Holding a person awaiting trial beyond the legally allowed time or longer than he or she would have spent had they been sentenced for the offence they have been detained for or charged, is an infringement of their fundamental human right which is under section 35 of the 1999 constitution as amended.

However, data from the Research findings on the capacity of the prisons and the congestion level amongst the selected prison show that all prisons found in the South are overcrowded. There is an urgent need for collaboration among the three arms of the criminal justice system to enhance synergy so that any individual brought to prison as awaiting trial, the case will be determined as quickly as possible.

Thus, this finding corroborates with the finding of Ben (2010) who revealed the appalling increase on awaiting trial inmates.

3.3 Recommendations

This Study recommends based on findings that:

- That various recommendation generated from the various reforms committees which has been set up by previous government should be examined and implemented so as to bring about a drastic improvement on

the condition of the correctional services in the Niger Delta.
- Critical Reforms in the criminal justice system should be carried out so as to bring about a sense of urgency in justice delivery on the awaiting trial inmates in Niger Delta region.
- As a matter of urgency government should erect more structures in the correctional service yards in order to accommodate the ever-increasing number of inmates across the Niger Delta Correctional services.

5. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the study that the facilities in the correctional service are not adequate, and there has been no improvement in recent times on the facilities amongst the selected prisons. The research found out that the facilities found in the prison are not adequate and there is no coherent, comprehensive planning processes necessary for the development of new facilities in the prison or its extension.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Approval for this study was obtained from the Department of Sociology, University of Port Harcourt Choba.

Also, verbal informed consent was obtained for each respondent. All the participants were informed that the study is voluntary and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Also participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained during and after data collection and that information given will be used for research purposes only. And lastly articles and authors used were sighted accordingly in this research.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/55567