

## **NEXUS BETWEEN SKILLS/GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND RECIDIVISM IN SELECTED CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN NORTH EAST, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed at examining the nexus between skills/general educational development programmes and recidivism in selected correctional centres in North East, Nigeria. This study employed a descriptive survey design and an exploratory qualitative method. The instrument for data collection was semi structured questionnaire which were administered to 600 respondents out of 3532 inmates in three selected correctional centers and In-depth interview with eighteen (18) correctional officers/staffs. While the multistage cluster sampling procedure was employed in selecting respondents for quantitative data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select correctional officials who provided the qualitative data for the study. The qualitative data were transcribed and arranged in themes. Findings showed that majority of the respondents (73.4% and 67.4%) were of the opinion that the skills/GED could lead to increase in self-esteem and improved career interest respectively. Many respondents (62.2%) also believe that exposure to skills/GED could raise social consciousness and offer intellectual opportunity to people whose identities have been swallowed by the criminal justice. On the contrary, more than half of the respondents (59.1%) said that exposure to skills/GED by inmates cannot decrease recidivism. Overall, the results suggest that inmates in the sample held positive view of the potentials of the skills/GED. Such positive view could therefore impact on how inmates might begin to accept various versions of the skills/GED programmes. Further, a graphical detail of the previous data is presented in stacked bar chart. The study recommends among others correctional centers should be formal schools equipped with educational facilities.

**Keywords:** General Educational Development Program, Skills, Recidivism, Correctional Centres, North East-Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Correctional service centers, everywhere in the world exist as a symbol of the society's desire to segregate its criminal. Originally, the reason for the segregation of inmates was to punish. Consequently, convicts were beaten, tortured and subjected to inhuman treatment in addition to confinement. However, the emergence of the positivist school in criminology led by Lambroso (1836), Goring (1913), Kretschmer (1921), Goddard (1921: 1926), Hooton (1939), Bowlby (1946), etc. prompted the transformation of prisons to reformation and rehabilitation center.

One of the most employed types of programmes available to imprisoned persons since the 1930s is the skills/educational programs (Clark & Rydberg, 2016; Lawrence, Mears, Dubin, & Travis, 2002). Prison-based education programming generally includes adult basic education which borders on helping inmates earn a secondary degree, as well as post secondary education opportunities such as career/technical program certificates, associate degrees, and even bachelor's degrees (Duwe, 2017). Some of the courses taught in the prison are mathematics, science, history, geography, philosophy,

religion, foreign languages, literacy, vocation, etc. (Ilechukwu & Ugwuozor, 2017). A major aim of the educational programmes is the curtailment of criminal activities upon release from prison (Lawrence, Mears, Dubin and Fravis 2002). Other individual and societal benefits of prison skill/education have been highlighted in literature. Some of the benefits include, acquiring practical knowledge to increase employment opportunities for inmates upon release, encouraging responsible thinking, preventing further crime, ensuring successful return to society, (Frey, 2014; Tønseth & Bergsland, 2019), increasing ex-prisoners self-esteem and improving their outlook about life, among others.

Globally, several studies (Czerniawski, 2015; Makarios, Steiner & Travis, 2010; Tønseth & Bergsland, 2019) have focused on the benefits and value of correctional education to inmates in a variety of ways. Nonetheless, authors like Duwe and Clark (2014) have noted that many of the results have been mixed, making it impossible to draw a firm conclusion based on the available data. For example, findings from earlier meta-analyses of correctional education from the United States have shown that prison educational programmes have positive, negative and mixed effects on mostly recidivism levels among inmates following their release (Aos, Miller & Drake, 2006; Lipton, Martinson & Wilks, 1975; Lois, Bozick, Steele, Saunders & Jeremy, 2013; MacKenzie, 2006; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000). Similarly, in an evaluation of prison education and training across Europe, Hawley, Murphy and Souto-Otero (2013) described how education and training for prisoners helped reduce the social costs of crime and supported the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into society. In addition, Callan and Gardner (2007) have found that correctional educational programmes have had significant impact on recidivism, employment opportunities and successful re-integration of prisoners following their release in Australia.

Furthermore, in Africa, few evidences exist to provide insights into the effectiveness and potentials of similar educational programmes on recidivism, employment opportunities, self-esteem, self-efficacy, etc among inmates. For instance, Fakude (2012) found that educational programmes improved inmates' self-esteem and self-efficacy in a correctional centre in Gauteng province, South Africa. Kheswa and Lobi (2014) also found that recidivism was relatively low and offenders' stress level decreased because of the exposure to school enrolment in Eastern Cape, South Africa. Further, in Kenya, Wafula and Koome's (2018) study indicated that the prison skills/education programme was of great benefit to ex-convict who owned small scale businesses. On the contrary, recent report from Malawi, reflected that educational programme in the prisons had not been effective because of management structures, resources availability and teachers' capacity problems (Kajawo, 2019). Moreover, prison skills/educational programmes were not linked to job acquisition upon release but were linked to reduced recidivism in Nsawam Prisons, Ghana (Hagan, 2013).

While there is a burgeoning interest in evaluating prison skills/educational programmes in literature and in various countries, there is almost no data on the effectiveness and issues surrounding prison's skills/general educational development in Nigeria and more particularly in the North-East Nigeria. Therefore, understanding the current state of prison's skills/general education development; as Panacea to Recidivism is crucial for policy developments and intervention initiatives that aim to

improve Nigeria's prison education's impact on inmates. As a result, this study attempts to examine the inmates in selected correctional centers and skills/general educational development programmes in the northeast, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the nature and structure of correctional centers's Skills/general education development (GED) in North East, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the nexus between skills/general education development programmes (GED) and recidivism in North East, Nigeria?

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the prison's general education development (GED) programmes in North East Nigeria. However, the specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Assess the nature and structure of prison's skills/general education development (GED) in North East Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the nexus between prison's skill/general education developments (GED) in North East, Nigeria.

### **Concept and Overview of Basic Tenets in the Study**

#### **Skills/General Education Development (GED) Programmes**

Clemmer (1958) noted that educational programmes in prisons have been a central part of correctional system since the 1930s. Adams et al. (1994) added that the programme began with "training schools" for delinquents, and later developed into the provision of academic and vocational education programmes and has now become almost a universal element for incarceration. These programmes address the educational deficiency among individuals sent to prisons as well as sustain the general notion about the significance of education in leading a productive and fulfilled life (Adams et al., 1994; Glaser, 1969). Adams et al. also submitted that the prison educational programmes have several characteristics that make them alluring to prison authorities. Some of the attributes include the provision of "incentives to inmates in surroundings that are otherwise devoid of constructive activities; they provide exposure to possible civilian role models; and they engage inmates for many hours in quiet, productive activity in an otherwise monotonous institutional environment" (Adams et al., 1994, p. 434). The authors concluded that such education programmes are a central part of what has been described as "dynamic security" in prison.

Basically, the prison education programmes include general education, vocational education and non-formal education. A few attempts are made to describe what vocational prison education and non-formal prison education are. In this study, vocational prison education is seen as the type of education or training that prepares prisoners or inmates to work as a technician or in various jobs such as a trade or a craft while serving prison terms or upon release from prison. In the view of Anyanwu, Onyechi, Adikwu, Ezegbe and Otu (2018);

the term vocational education is general and includes every form of education that aims at the acquisition of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or

employment or that provides the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise a profession, art or activity, independently at their age and training level, even if the training program contains also elements of general education (Anyanwu et al., 2018, p. 15312)

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (n.d.), vocational education in prisons is designed to instruct and guide inmates about general employment skills or skills that are required for specific jobs and industries. NIJ (n.d.) equally added that the general aim of vocational education is to reduce inmates' risk of engaging in crime by stirring their entrepreneurial spirit so that they can be self sufficient when they are released. Furthermore, Wilson, Gallagher and MacKenzie (2000) added that vocational education programmes in prison can reduce institutional problems and behaviors by replacing inmates' idle time with constructive activity. In addition, some vocational training programs can assist in the operation of prisons by having inmates assist in institutional maintenance tasks (NIJ, n.d.).

Furthermore, non-formal education is the type of programme, which aims at helping prisoners to address issues such as anger management, thinking skills, and several other skills to get integrated in society following their release (Hawley et al., 2013). Non-formal education is also concerned with improving prisoners coping mechanism, self-esteem and attitude towards challenges and life in general. Meanwhile, general education is that type of education that has a resemblance with the mainstream educational settings outside prison facilities, where subjects and or courses are offered within a conventional school setting. Prison-based education programming generally includes adult basic education, which borders on helping inmates earn a secondary degree, as well as postsecondary education opportunities such as career/technical program certificates, associate degrees, and even bachelor's degrees (Duwe, 2018).

Some of the courses taught in the prison are mathematics, science, history, geography, philosophy, religion, foreign languages, literacy, etc. (Ilechukwu&Ugwuozor, 2017). Ilechukwu and Ugwuozor (2017) further asserted that while vocational and general education and training are structured and happens in a sort of classroom that is organized within the prison facility, non-formal education could take place in variety of context. Also, while the goal of vocational and general education is to prepare prisoners for the useful to society upon release, the non-formal education aims to help prisoners enrich themselves psychologically. Nevertheless, these three types of prison education can be interwoven in reality. For instance, inmates who offer general education may become exposed to non-formal or even the vocational type of education, while being taught in the class.

## **Recidivism**

Recidivism is a word derived from the Latin as "recidere", meaning "to fall back". Recidivism is often defined as the re-arrest, re-conviction, and/or re-incarceration of an ex-offender within a given time frame. Recidivism in most studies in the advanced countries includes technical violations of an offender's parole or probation. Re-arrest statistics also include individuals who are found not guilty of the charge(s). From the social-legal point of view, the term "recidivism" refers to "the habit of relapsing into crimes by the criminals" (Paranjape, 2012). Thus, recidivism is the act of re-engaging

in criminal behaviour after being punished and/or rehabilitated for a previous crime (Elderbroon and King, 2014). In other words, it means repetitious criminal activity. Recidivism is established when an offender defers correction and he/she continues in criminal act.

In the same vein, recidivism is the relapse of criminal activity and it is generally measured by a former prisoner returning to prison for a new offence (Stephen, Krog and Nel, 2015: 12). To Ugwuoke (2015), recidivism is generally used for describing repetitious of criminal activities, and a recidivist offender is an individual who engages in such activities. Okunola, Aderinto and Atere (2002) made it clearer as they defined recidivism as the act of persistently going back to a life of crime after correction. Thus, a recidivist is that person who is prone to crime commission and he/she is consistently imprisoned/sent to correctional centre. Usually, such a lifestyle begins with crime commission or omission, arrest, initial trial and conviction, rehabilitation and integration into a prison sub-culture, released to the society with rejection by the larger society, support by other ex-convicts, involvement in some other criminal activities, with another arrest, trial and conviction, and so on. The cycle goes on and on like that, and the recidivist can hardly stay away from prison life. They live from one prison (or the same prison) to another. Hence, recidivists are called “jail-birds”. Their pattern of life is from crime to the police, to court, to prison, to the society to crime again and back to the Criminal Justice System again and it has been described as revolving door of criminal justice system.

Globally, the rate of recidivism is not accurately known, as it depends on the penal system of every country of the world and other several factors. The concept of recidivism is relativism in nature. The rate could be measured based on re-arrest, re-conviction or depending on particular number of years of duration. United State of America has the highest incarceration rate and recidivism within the first-five years of release in the developed world (Rivers, 2017). In comparison, Norway has lower rate of recidivism. Norway’s incarceration rate is 75 per 100,000 people, compared to 707 people for every 100,000 people in the United State of America. When criminals in Norway leave prison, they stay out. It has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the world at 20% or below. The US has one of the highest at 76.6% of prisoners are re- arrested within five years. Norway also has a relatively low level of crime compared to the USA (Sterbenz, 2014). The reason behind this Norway’s lower incarceration rate is not far-fetched. It is because the country relies on a concept of “restorative justice” which aims to repair the harm caused by criminal rather than punishing offenders. This removing people’s freedom is enough of a punishment (Sterbenz, 2014).

In Africa context, Bello (2017) posited that, recidivism is seen to be the norm with African prisoners. The major causes include: incorrigibility, failure of the sanction, failure of support in re- integration, failure of rehabilitating programmes, peer pressure and other social provocations, economic stress, mental health, inability to attain employment, lack of education, lack of support. Furthermore, Southern Africa has the highest number of offenders behind the bars in Africa. Generally, it is clear that Central Asia, Southern African and the Caribbean have particularly larger numbers of people behind bars and recidivism (Walmsley, 2003). South Africa has a high level of crime and thus overcrowding in prisons (Lekalakala, 2016).

One of the basic problems facing the Nigerian prisons today is the high rate of returning of ex-convicts to the Nigerian prison (recidivism) which presents an uncomfortable figure. The rate of recidivism in Nigeria has been attributed to a number of factors and one of it is the attitude of members of the public to the ex-convicts on re-entry. Re-entry has been a serious challenge to the released offenders as they are stigmatized in the society. Hence in a study, Okunola, Aderinto and Atere (2002) stated that, some prisoners adduced the society's hostile attitude as responsible for their return to the prison frequently. The society makes it difficult for the ex-convicts to engage in gainful employment and normal relationships. This incurably draws them back to criminality and recidivism, and the only place where prisoners are accepted is the correctional centers (prison).

The increasing rate of recidivism in Nigeria is due to the fact that the efforts to control crime through well intentional offenders' treatment programmes in the Nigerian prisons appeared to be patently not effective enough. The rate of recidivism reflects the degree to which released offenders have been rehabilitated and the role that correctional programmes play in re-integrating prisoners into the society (McKean and Ransford, 2004). Furthermore, recidivism can be measured in diverse ways as there is no specific measure of it. These methods of measuring recidivism have different criteria for labelling a person as a recidivist. The widely used measure of labelling one as a recidivist is, if the person returns to prison within a given span of time usually one to three years (Ruggero, Dougherty and Klofas, 2015). The measurement of recidivism could be from the following records: re-arrest, re-arraignment, re-conviction, re-sentenced, re-incarceration/re-imprisonment and so on.

However in Nigeria, the actual recidivism levels to some extent are unknown because of the poor recording system in Nigeria and the reliance on local police agencies and courts to supply the information about recidivists. And in some situations, the offender provided a different name or a fraudulent identity in the document to the police or the courts and the mis-information are not usually discovered and they would likely not be captured by the data system. Even, if the criminal is correctly identified and the document is sent to the repository, and the repository may not be able to match the person identified in the document with their records. Therefore, low advancement in technology and poor database recordings management, as well as, falsification from the offenders makes the problem of measuring recidivism scientifically in Nigeria more cumbersome.

### **Skills/General Education Development (GED) Program as Panacea to Recidivism**

There are various perspectives focusing on the benefits and value of correctional education to inmates in a variety of ways. Overall, these perspectives suggest that prison-based education programming is capable of improving post-prison employment, reducing prison misconduct and recidivism, and delivering a strong return-on-investment (ROI). Nevertheless, it has been established that educational programmes conducted in prisons have some clear benefits on inmates, the prison and the entire society. As to the inmates, regardless of whether they are serving sentences for life or a short period, the benefits of skills/GED are obvious. In addition, the Northwestern Prison Education Programme (2021) posited that GED could foster racial and ethnic relations that are usually linked with prison violence and unrest. It could also improve relationships between staff members and inmates

(Northwestern Prison Education Programme, 2021). Furthermore, GED has been linked to a number of therapeutic benefits such as alleviating boredom, improving self-esteem and potentials (Czerniawski, 2015). GED has also been identified as a tool used in addressing religious and other forms of extremism that are found in prisons (UNESCO, 2017).

Beyond these benefits which are peculiar to the context of the prison, a link between skills/GED and recidivism has been emphasized in literature. According to Benda (2018), the rate of recidivism is linked to lower educational attainment. This because individuals with low educational levels usually find it difficult to re-integrate back into the society due to their lack of access to finance and social support system after they are released from prison (Benda, 2018). This is perhaps why prison education have often been encouraged in practice and as it has been highlighted, its benefits on inmates' recidivism levels are well documented. Others have equally looked at the undesirable consequences of general prison education on prisoners (Clark & Rydberg, 2016; Steiner, Butler & Ellison, 2014). For example, Anderson (as cited in Duwe & Clark, 2014) that the negative impact of GED Diploma courses on recidivism could be more pronounced in offenders who are male, young, of African American ethnic group, and those with no previous history of imprisonment. Lambert et al. (2015) equally maintained that educational programmes in prisons lead to emotional burnout among teachers and educational instructors who work there.

Other assertions about the undesirable consequences of prison education programmes have been highlighted. For example, Connectus (2019) suggests that such programmes could be used by inmates to their personal benefits in a negative ways. Connectus (2019) also maintained that inmates might have a conditioned and unfavourable perception about prison education even if they were exposed to it. According to the author, inmates with life sentence might perceive prison education as wasteful, because it does not guarantee any economic or social (status) returns.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design and an exploratory qualitative method in order to address the objectives and examine other crucial issues that have been raised in the study. The descriptive cross-section design is justified because of its capacity to collect original data about a population that is too large to observe directly. It is also effective for measuring attitude, perceptions and beliefs in a large population (Babbie, 2013; Bhattacharjee, 2012; Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). In addition, the exploratory qualitative method is appropriate for this study because it satisfies the researcher's desire to gain deeper insights (beyond statistical facts and figures) into meanings people attribute to phenomena (e.g., Babbie, 2013; Shank, 2002). Therefore, the combination of these designs enabled the researcher to examine the inmates in selected correctional centers.

The study area for this research endeavour is the North East Nigeria. This area, which is one of the six geo-political zones of Nigeria, consists of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe.

The population of this study is 3532 adult male and female, aged 18 years and above in all the 30 correctional centers in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The researcher arrived at the total population of the study by summing up the total number of inmates in the study area.

The sample size for this study was six hundred (600). The respondents for his study were served questionnaire instrument for quantitative study. However, the sample for the quantitative data of the study was determined using the Cochran's (1963) Equation. With 95 percent level of confidence (confidence interval - + 10%), an estimated level of incarceration in all the 30 correctional facilities in North East Nigeria at 50% (.5) and a permitted margin of error at .04 (4 percentage points), the researcher determined the 600 sample size for the study.

The multistage cluster sampling procedure was employed in selecting the respondents for the quantitative data for the study. This procedure is best suited for this study as Babbie (2013) succinctly averred that multi-stage cluster sampling "may be used when it's either impossible or impractical to compile an exhaustive list of elements composing the target population." First, from the officially clustered 30 correctional centers in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, the researcher employed a systematic sampling with a random start to select a sample of correctional center from a sampling frame of 30 prisons. In doing this, a prison was randomly selected after which every Kth (i.e., 10<sup>th</sup>) correctional center is chosen (where sampling interval,  $K = N/n$   $30/3=10$ ). The correctional centers finally selected were Azare correctional center in Bauchi State, Maiduguri Maximum correctional center in Borno State and Wukari correctional center in Taraba State. To determine the sample fraction for each correctional centers, inmates were randomly selected for inclusion.

A semi-structured questionnaire instrument (Likert five-point response scale of Strongly Agree; Agree; Not Decided; Disagree and Strongly Disagree) was employed for the study. The purpose for the choice of a semi-structured questionnaire was to give respondents equal avenue to answer questions that may generate unexpected insights not otherwise available from structured data alone. As for the qualitative aspect, the In Dept Interview (IDI) schedule was employed to elicit data from the selected key respondents. The IDI schedule complemented the questionnaire for the study.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis was used for this study. The researcher employed the thematic analysis for the qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79), thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data. The researcher employed the mean and standard deviation for data analysis. Out of 600 copies of questionnaire distributed, 592 copies were successfully retrieved from the field and it was on the basis of the retrieved copies of questionnaire that inferences were made.



## Results

**Table: 1: Linkage between skills/general education development programmes and recidivism**

Linkage between GED and recidivism	M(SDa)	SD		D		N/D		A		SA		Total (%)
		N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Increased chances of gaining employment	3.26(1.14)	56	(9.5)	83	(14.0)	184	(31.1)	191	(32.3)	78	(13.2)	592(100)
Decrease in recidivism level	2.26(1.30)	253	(42.7)	97	(16.4)	109	(18.4)	104	(17.6)	29	(4.9)	592(100)
Increased self-esteem	3.82(1.25)	54	(9.1)	48	(8.1)	55	(9.3)	227	(38.3)	208	(35.1)	592(100)
Improved career interests	3.39(1.21)	83	(14.0)	56	(9.5)	54	(9.1)	345	(58.3)	54	(9.1)	592(100)
Political, personal and social transformation	2.88(1.27)	101	(17.1)	128	(21.6)	195	(32.9)	80	(13.5)	88	(14.9)	592(100)
raise social consciousness and offer intellectual opportunity to people whose identities have been swallowed by the criminal justice	3.56(1.25)	40	(6.8)	114	(19.3)	70	(11.8)	213	(36.0)	155	(26.2)	592(100)
Allows inmates to take responsibility for their crime and seek true change in their lives	3.39(1.39)	80	(13.5)	106	(17.9)	62	(10.5)	190	(32.1)	154	(26.0)	592(100)
Sophisticated and rational world view (enables the inmates to see the world differently)	3.36(1.57)	132	(22.3)	62	(10.5)	60	(10.1)	138	(23.3)	200	(33.8)	592(100)

**Source: (Survey Data, 2023)**

As shown in table 1, majority of the respondents felt that the correctional skills/general education development (GED) offers several benefits to the inmates. Respondents appeared to have agreed with statements showing the efficacy of the programme and disagreeing with the perceptions suggesting otherwise. For example, majority of the respondents (73.4% and 67.4%) were of the opinion that the skills/GED could lead to increase in self-esteem and improved career interest respectively. Many respondents (62.2%) also believe that exposure to skills/GED could raise social consciousness and offer intellectual opportunity to people whose identities have been swallowed by the criminal justice. On the contrary, more than half of the respondents (59.1%) said that exposure to skills/GED by inmates cannot decrease recidivism. Overall, the results suggest that inmates in the sample held positive view of the potentials of the skills/GED. Such positive view could therefore impact on how inmates might begin to accept various versions of the skills/GED programmes.

Furthermore, participants who took part in the qualitative aspect of the study were asked to comment on the benefits of correctional skills/general education development (GED) in North East, Nigeria. To

this end, participants identified various advantages that emanate as a result of inmates' exposure to different forms of skills/GED programmes. Many participants believed that exposure to skills/GED programmes; especially the prison education and vocational activities reduce the rate of recidivism. One participant maintained that,

...prison education and most especially vocational education have a way of engaging inmates after release to the extent that what they have learnt are put to use and keep them from engaging in any form of criminal activities. There are many cases of people [inmates] who have gone through our vocational trainings and have become responsible, self-reliant and are adding value to the society. We therefore cannot overemphasize the undeniable impact of vocational training in reducing recidivism (**Male, Correctional officer Assistant II [PAII], Azare**).

Another participant equally described how being exposed to educational activities in prisons offers inmates the opportunity to take a new lead of their lives. According to the participant,

...most of the inmates are dropouts who have never got a real shot at getting proper education in their lives. This is also coupled with the fact that other unexplained factors have kept them out of school. Now the prison environment provides a contrived experience, which could encourage learning and upon graduation or release, inmates could begin to aspire to become better and responsible (**Female, Correctional Officer Assistant III [PAIII], Maiduguri**).

Participants also spoke of the individual or personal benefits of exposure to GED programmes. According to many of the participants, such positive personal outcomes most often come from the spiritual or religious activities often partaken by inmates. As an example, one participant spoke about how many inmates encounter 'salvation' and their lives become transformed to such an extent that they become preachers of the gospel (either being a Christian or a Muslim). Such impact according to the participant, gives the inmates a new identity that enables them to take charge of their lives and be responsible for all their actions. In addition, the effect of inmates' exposure to recreational activities (i.e., football, exercise, volleyball) was described on inmates' self-esteem and general wellbeing. As one participant commented,

Physical activities such as playing football, tennis, volleyball and other indoor sporting activities could naturally improve wellbeing and self-esteem. Therefore when inmates are physically involved at this level, there's a way it takes their minds off the harsh realities of the prison world and helps them to relax and feel a little good about themselves (**Female, Correctional Officer Assistant III [PAIII], Wukari**).

## **Discussion of Findings**

Respondents appeared to have agreed with statements showing the efficacy of the programme and disagreeing with the perceptions suggesting otherwise. For example, majority of the respondents (73.4% and 67.4%) were of the opinion that the skills/GED could lead to increase in self-esteem and improved career interest respectively. Many respondents (62.2%) also believe that exposure to skills/GED could raise social consciousness and offer intellectual opportunity to people whose identities have been swallowed by the criminal justice. Other positive impacts perceived by many of the respondents include improved chances of being gainfully employed upon release. The current findings reecho the outcomes on the impact of skills/GED in several previous studies (e.g., Boderick,

2015; Igbinovia&Omorogiuwa, 2019; Steutrer& Smith, 2003). For example, Igbinovia and Omorogiuwa's (2019) studies revealed that inmate's exposure to skills/GED programmes could raise the socio-consciousness and increase positive productivity of inmates among a prisoner sample in Benin-Sapele road and Oko maximum security prisons in Benin City, Edo State. It is therefore lucid to understand that such positive view as has been expressed by prisoners in the present study could impact on how prisoners might begin to accept various versions of the skills/GED programmes. This could also give some insights into how policy developers in the area of prison reforms address the issues of skills/GED in prison. On the contrary, more than half of the respondents (59.1%) said that exposure to skills/GED by inmates cannot decrease recidivism. This perception is in line with the recent report from Malawi, reflecting that educational programme in the prisons had not been effective (Kajawo, 2019). Probable explanation for such outcome might be because of management structures, resources availability and teachers' capacity problems (Kajawo, 2019), which are some of the challenges still facing proper implementation and sustenance of skills/GED programmes in prisons.

### **Conclusion**

The perceived impact of all the types of skills/GED programmes highlighted in the study was positive except that it would not necessarily lower recidivism. More than half of the respondents (59.1%) said that exposure to skills/GED by inmates cannot decrease recidivism. This is some of the challenges still facing proper implementation and sustenance of skills/GED programmes in correctional center. So based on the available information highlighted in the literature and the findings from the field, I conclude by saying that Skill/GED is a panacea to recidivism.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this article, the following recommendations are presented.

- a. The correctional centers should be sufficiently funded by the government to boost effective rehabilitation of inmates. More emphasis should be placed on focusing on educational and vocational facilities in the correctional centers to reduce the inmate's chance of recidivism as they received proper rehabilitation.
- b. Formal schools equipped with educational facilities and qualified teachers should be established within the correctional centers premises. Government should also establish standard vocational training centers, with paid instructors who will work on full time. Skills acquisition programmes such as computer trainings, auto-mechanics, and photography, barbing and hair-dressing are established to boost inmates' employment opportunities on discharge from the prisons it will reduce the rate of reoffending.
- c. Federal government of Nigeria should promulgate a law to reduce social stigma on ex-prisoners and protect them. Constitutionally, ex- prisoners should not be denied opportunities in the society (such as right to employment, vote and be voted for). This will reduce their rate of recidivism in Nigeria.

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