

Assessment of Counselling Services Available to Prison Inmates in South-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated availability of counselling services in South East, Nigeria prisons. Based on the purpose of the study, one research question was raised and a hypothesis postulated that guided the study. It employed descriptive Survey design. Population of the study was 9,241 prison inmates. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 924 subjects comprising 116 convicted inmates and 808 non-convicted prison inmates. The instrument for data collection was Questionnaire for Counselling Services in Prison (QCSP). The face and content validities of the instrument was assured. In determining the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha test was used, reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained. The research question raised was answered using descriptive statistic (Frequency and percentage scores). The major findings showed that there are counselling services for prison inmates in South-East Nigeria. There was no significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services available to prison inmates.

Key words: *Counselling Services, Prison Inmates, South-East, Nigeria.*

I. Introduction

The transformation of one's life style may be dependent on the strength of professional counsellors to utilize counselling services in handling the individual's issues so that undesired behaviour would be reformed. Patterson and Welfel (2000) defined counselling as a relationship between a professionally trained person and an individual seeking help in gaining greater self-understanding and awareness for self-developmental growth. Counselling according to Okeke, (2003) is also a helping relationship involving the counsellor and the client, where the counsellor uses his professional knowledge and skills to assist the client attain proper development and maturity, improved functioning and ability to cope with life's problems. Contributing, Awam and Ani (2006), defined counselling as help given to an individual to become aware of oneself and the ways in which the individual relating to the world around.

Thus, the authors saw counselling services as educational (intellectual services), vocational (self-oriented services) and personal-social (sociability of self) for self-actualization. Omebe (2005) noted that

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counselling is a process in which the counsellor assists the client to make interpretations of facts relating to a plan or adjustment which the client needs to make through educational, socio-personal and vocational counselling services.

More so, during communication and relationship interactions, the counsellor offers the following service to the inmates; counselling service, information service, appraisal service, follow-up service and evaluation, research service among others. Counselling service according to Awam and Ani (2006) is a specialized interaction between the client experiencing a problem and the counsellor who tries to help. Omebe (2005) noted that counselling service is making the individual to have better understanding of himself and his world as counselling does not only provides a forum for interaction, but also links their client and the counsellor through appropriate information service.

Information service is a channel through which inmate/individuals' are equipped with the necessary information they needed in the areas of educational, vocational and personal-social; information which is important as it helps them to make wise decisions about life. Information service is a vital aspect of guidance services especially now that the society is growing complex. The complexity of the society enlarges the scope of information needed by inmates. Atul (2009) was of the view that information service should be on intensifying the amount of information made available to individuals. This is important as it determine the quality of decisions individual make either through test or non-test. This is what is referred to as appraisal service.

Appraisal service involves the use of test and non-test instruments to collect, analyze and interpret data on individuals. According to Okeke (2003) information occurring from appraisal service help inmates to understand themselves better. Okeke maintained that appraisal service offers counsellors and significant others the opportunity of having insight into the strengths and weakness of inmates. Onyemerekeya and Ugwuegbulam (2005) opined that information from appraisal services can be used for different purposes, such as placement-Service among others. According to Onyemerekeya and Ugwuegbulam, placement has to do with the process of helping individuals to enter and to make adjustment in the next stage of development. This-adjustment involves steps towards further adjustment in a career after leaving prison/school. Placement services are organized to help students in curriculum selection, participation in extra-class activities and logical selection of vocation. The counsellor at the process of making good placement should be ready to evaluate clients' strength from time to time in order to know where more attention is needed.

Evaluation Service is designed to ascertain the extent to which the counselling programme previously carried out in correctional centres is meeting the objectives for which it was established. Follow-up of an inmate according to Nsude (2000), is necessary since the result may bring, about programme adjustment or improvement if out-right failure or unsatisfactory success has been detected. Thus, evaluation will determine other important role the counsellor ought to offer to the client especially as it relates to vital information that is capable of solving individual problems. Through research, counsellors' discovers relevant and vital information that can improve inmates' life at the correctional centre for self-understanding and life adjustment. Omebe (2005) noted that research service should be an on-going process which professional counsellors should embrace and encourage. This is because it will increase their knowledge in dealing with individuals of special needs and thereby make proper decision as at when due. Referral service affords the counsellor an opportunity

to refer case that is out of jurisdiction or cases that needed the attention of specialists like clinical psychologist, medical practitioner, and clergy among others. Okeke (2002) noted that referral service is one of the most important service offered by counsellors in order to reform people's life even at correctional centers. Therefore, counselling service is designed to educate both counsellors' and clients in order for them to reach their expected goals/needs. So, considering the obvious needs of counselling services to prison inmates and society at large, researchers were pushed to ascertain if there is any counselling service available to prison inmates in Nigeria especially in South-East. It is against this background that this study intends to ascertain the availability of counselling services for prison inmates in South East, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the availability of counselling services for prison inmates' in the South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determined the counselling services given to convicted and non-convicted prison inmates.

Research Questions

The research was guided with the below study question.

1. What are the counselling services given to convicted and non-convicted inmates in South-East, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services given.

II. Method

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of this study was South East, Nigeria. South East is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. There are five states in the study area namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The States are Igbo speaking ethnic group with residents from other parts of the country and even foreigners.

The rationale for choosing south East, Nigeria is based on the evidence that the prison inmates' opportunities to acquire counselling services and other vocational related jobs seemed to have been jeopardized in South East, Nigeria (Ajah & Nweke, 2017). Instead of training and rehabilitating the prison inmates, the prison officials appeared to have turned down the fundamental objectives of prison institution. As a result, about 90% of prison inmates in South East Nigeria seem not to be socially and psychologically stable.

The target population of the study was all the convicted and non-convicted prison inmates in South-East Nigeria. This comprised 9,241 prison inmates (1,133 convicted males; 29 convicted females; 7,819 Awaiting trial males; 260 Awaiting trial females). Specifically, prisons in Abia State contained 1,625 prison inmates (169 convicted males; 4 convicted females; 1384 awaiting trial males; 68 awaiting trial females), Anambra State has 1560 prison inmates (205 convicted males; 4 convicted female; 1,320 awaiting trial males; 31 awaiting trial female), Ebonyi State contained 1,082 prison inmates (115 convicted males; 4 convicted

females; 935 awaiting trial males; 28 awaiting trial females, Enugu State contained 2,352 prison inmates (379 convicted males; 11 convicted females; 1,916 awaiting trial males; 46 awaiting trial females) and finally Imo State has 2622 prison inmates (265 convicted males; 6 convicted females; 2,264 awaiting trial males; 87 awaiting trial females). Source: Nigeria Prison Service Headquarters, Abuja, 2017.

The sample size used for the study was 924 inmates chosen through multistage sampling technique. In the first stage the researcher used purposive sampling to select inmates from Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state. Meanwhile, Abia State has 1,625 prison inmates with 171 convicted and 1452 awaiting trials, Anambra State has 1560 prison inmates 209 convicted 1,351 awaiting trials, Ebonyi State has 1,082 prison inmates with 119 convicted and 963 awaiting trials, Enugu State has 2,352 prison inmates with 390 convicted and 1,962 awaiting trials and finally Imo State has 2622 prison inmates with 271 convicted and 2,351 awaiting trial males. This all together, given a total of 1160 convicted inmates and 8081 non-convicted (awaiting trails). In determining the sample size, Nwana (1998) observed that if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% or less sample will do and if several thousands, a 5% or less sample will do.’’

The sample was chosen using the percentage for few thousands for convicted and non-convicted (awaiting trails) which permits the researcher to use 10% on both inmates according to Nwana (1998). Therefore, the researcher used 10% to determine the sample size of convicted and non-convicted (awaiting trails), which gave a manageable population that was investigated.

The instrument used for data collection for the study is a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Questionnaire for Counselling Services in Prison (QCSP). The items of the instrument were generated from the reviewed literature (for example Crawford, 2003; Garcia, 2013; Rujjanave, 2008; Schirmer, 2008). The QCSP has parts A and B. Part A, elicited the personal demographic characteristics of the respondents such as prison inmate status, gender, state, sentence (in years), offense of conviction and age. Part B has two sections. In section A, contained 13 items which were placed on a 2-point scale of Available (A) and Not Available

Three copies of the instrument were given to three experts for face validation. The experts included two from Guidance and Counselling unit of Department of Educational Foundations and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These experts were requested to face-validate and scrutinize the instrument in terms of the appropriateness, relevance, and clarity of the items with regard to the specific purpose, research question and null hypothesis stated for the study. The experts made some suggestions and corrections. Among the suggestion is that few items in the cluster were poorly articulated and needed to be recast. The corrections pointed out by the experts led to the restructuring of some items while the irrelevant ones were deleted.

In ensuring the reliability of the instrument, Questionnaire for Counselling Services in Prison (QCSP) was trial tested by administering 60 copies of the questionnaire to 20 convicted inmates and 40 awaiting trails in Agbor prison yard in Delta State, Nigeria which is outside the study area. To determine the internal consistency of the items, Cronbach Alpha statistical method was used to analyze the data collected. The result of data analysis gave Alpha coefficient values of 0.83 value indicating that the instrument is reliable to be used for the study.

Data collection was done by direct delivery and retrieval method. The researchers with the help of 5 research assistants who were briefed on the administration of the research instrument distributed and retrieved from the respondents the copies of the questionnaires on completion. The use of research assistants facilitated the distribution and retrieval of a questionnaire copies as well as to ensure a 100% return. Meanwhile frequency and percentage statistical tool was used for analysis of data obtained for research question and null hypothesis. A score below 49.0% was considered negative which expressed that the services was not available while 50.0% and above was considered positive which showed the availability of the service. Also, t-test statistic test was used to test the null hypothesis formulated for the study at 0.05 probability level.

III. Result

Research Question: What are the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Scores of the Respondents on the Counselling Services Available to Prison Inmates in South-East, Nigeria

S/N	Item	Convicted Inmates		Non-Convicted Inmates		Total		Dec.
		Available		Available		Available	%	
		F	%	F	%	F		
1	Educational /academic services	106	12.6	738	87.4	844	56.3	A
2	Vocational/career services	103	12.8	701	87.2	804	56.2	A
3	Social-personal services	40	72.7	15	27.3	55	86.35	A
4	Substance abuse counselling services	106	11.6	805	88.4	911	55.8	A
5	Rehabilitation services	59	8.8	610	91.2	669	54.4	A
6	Orientation services	68	9.0	690	91.0	758	54.5	A
7	Group counselling services	80	9.8	737	90.2	817	54.9	A
8	Information services	104	13.4	674	86.6	778	56.7	A
9	Guidance services	33	37.9	54	62.1	87	68.95	A
10	Referral services	35	15.3	194	84.7	229	57.65	A

11	Mental health counselling services	31	67.4	15	32.6	46	83.7	A
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Keys: \bar{X} = F =Frequency; A = Available; $Dec.$: Decision

Result in Table 1 showed the percentage scores of respondents on the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria. Based on the percentage of availability, social-personal services (86.35%), mental health counselling (83.7%), guidance services (68.95%), referral services (57.65%), information services (56.7%), education/academic services (56.3%), vocational/career services (56.2%), substance abuse (55.8%), group guidance services (55.8%), orientation services (54.5%), and rehabilitation (54.4%). Therefore, counselling services are available although to low degree to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services available to prison inmates in South East, Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of X² of Responses of Convicted and Non-Convicted Prison Inmates on the Counselling Services Available to Prison Inmates in South-East, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Convicted Inmates Awaiting Trial		X ²	Asymp. Sig.	Decision
		% Available	% Available			
1	Educational /academic services	12.6	87.4	.000 ^a	.988	Accepted
2	Vocational/career services	12.8	87.2	.372 ^a	.542	Accepted
3	Social-personal services	72.7	27.3	192.884 ^a	.000	Rejected
4	Substance abuse counselling services	11.6	88.4	49.765 ^a	.000	Rejected
5	Rehabilitation services	8.8	91.2	30.804 ^a	.000	Rejected
6	Orientation services	9.0	91.0	49.344 ^a	.000	Rejected
7	Group counselling services	9.8	90.2	49.033 ^a	.000	Rejected
8	Information services	13.4	86.6	2.968 ^a	.085	Accepted
9	Guidance services	37.9	62.1	56.340 ^a	.000	Rejected

10	Referral services	15.3	84.7	2.067 ^a	.151	Accepted
11	Mental health counselling services	67.4	32.6	132.605 ^a	.000	Rejected

X²=Chi-Square, Asymp. Sig. =P-Value

The result of data analysis in Table 2 shows that there was significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria, given the number of items with p-values of 0.000 which is below set benchmark of 0.05 probability level. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted inmates on the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria is rejected.

IV. Discussion

Base the assessment of availability of counselling services in South-East, Nigeria prisons. It was found that the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria include substance abuse counselling services, social-personal services, educational or academic services, group counselling services, vocational/career services, information services, orientation services, rehabilitation services. Further analysis indicated that there was significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria. The findings concur with Aba-Afari (2013) who showed that the counselling services given to prison inmates were educational, vocational and personal or psychological counselling. The findings of the present study support Ogunleye (2014) who revealed that the convicted inmates in the prisons are exposed to vocational skills when compared with their counterparts who are awaiting trial. Similar to the outcome of the current study, Agbakwuru and Ibe-Godfrey (2016) indicated that prison counselling influence their psychological, social and educational well-being. The consistency in the results of different study despite the time lag shows that prison counselling services are in progress. The indication is that the prison inmates would be reformed thus the uncontrollable impulse for recidivism among them would be reduced. With the availability of counselling services, the prison inmates are likely to live a crime-free life, have sound development and optimal growth in their psychological well-being.

V. Conclusion

The result revealed that counselling services are available to prison inmates in South-East, Nigeria but they prison inmates seriously suffer health challenges. Further analysis showed that there is no significant difference between the responses of convicted and non-convicted prison inmates on the counselling services available. Given that counselling services availability, prison inmates have the opportunities of exploring talents and career if they will be provided with good environment. On the contrary, if those counselling services are not given to prison inmates, instead of becoming productive members of society when out of prison, they will come

back more hardened. But with the availability of counselling services, the promising positive implication is that the prisoners may enjoy career path and career satisfaction which would be realizable if government would employ experts for such job.

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