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Effectiveness of Prisoner Reentry Programs for Reduction of Repeat Incarcerations in Nigeria

Emmanuel Dejo Oluwaniyi, PhD

Problem

In spite of the prevailing high rate of repeat incarcerations among the Nigerian ex-felons, there's an absence of empirical evidence to suggest the effectiveness of faith and nonfaith-based reentry programs in Nigerian.

Purpose

To assess the effectiveness of prisoner reentry programs for reducing repeat incarcerations in Nigeria through a quantitative study that used a retrospective-comparative design.

Significance

Generate findings that could:

- contribute to the body of knowledge; providing further evidence to suggest the direction of relationship between reentry programs and repeat incarceration.
- give background statistics for enhancing prisoner reentry approaches.
- drive policy, inform practice, and provide evidence that may empower relevant stakeholders for achieving a more successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into the community, free from further infractions.

Social Change Implications

The overarching social benefits are twofold: better life for ex-felons and safety for the community.

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Theory or Framework

The **general personality and cognitive social learning** (GPCSL) model (Andrew & Bonta, 2010) explains the variables (biosocial, distal, and proximal) that predict repeat incarceration.

The **transtheoretical model** (TTM) of change (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992).

- Explains transitioning of individuals away from influences that motivate deviant behaviors.
- Confirms necessity for intervention program for the inmates.

Relevant Scholarship

Prevailing **high reincarcerations** across the globe despite **different reentry interventions** established to address the issue (Deady, 2014; Osayi, 2013; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014).

In Nigeria, most criminal activities are traced to **formerly incarcerated individuals** (Abrifor, Atere, & Muoghalu, 2012).

Inconsistencies in the findings on the relationship between prisoner reentry programs and reincarcerations (Dodson, Cabage, & Klenowski, 2011; Duwe & King, 2012; May & Brown, 2011.)

In Nigeria, there was a disconnect between increasing prison reentry programs and growing reincarceration over the years (Abrifor et al., 2012)

No published evaluative studies on the effectiveness of reentry programs in Nigeria.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the difference in the repeat incarcerations status between the group of subjects who received treatment (faith- or nonfaith-based) while in prison and the subjects who did not?

RQ2: What is the difference in the repeat incarcerations status between the group of subjects who received faith-based treatment and those who received nonfaith-based treatment while in prison?

Participants

Samples drawn from population of **male prisoners** ($N = 2026$) released from 3 Nigerian medium security prisons between January 2010 and December 2013.

The sample size consisted of:

- 818 **men** for treated/nontreated analysis,
- 200 **men** for faith-/nonfaith-based treated.

Procedures

Sources of Data

- Prison records
- Records of organizations responsible for reentry programs.

Analysis

Analyses included:

- Multivariate analysis
- Propensity score matching.
- Logistic regression
- Cox regression (Survival analysis)

Findings

Treatment received before release statistically significantly reduced the odds of reincarceration for a released prisoner. Treatment reduced the odds of reincarceration by about 3%.

Age of a prisoner at release was associated with 8% decrease in reincarceration hazard. Likelihood of reincarceration was less with older ex-felons.

Offenders released closer to family base were about 39% less risky of reincarceration after release.

The odd reincarceration was 2.31 times higher for ex-felons with higher number of previous incarcerations.

Type of treatment received (faith or nonfaith-based) did not statistically affect reincarceration of ex-felons at a significant level.

Interpretation

Findings suggest that:

- Treatments obtained by offenders while in prison may minimize their return into crimes after release.
- Factors such as age on release, criminal history, completed jail terms, and access to post release support may influence risk of reoffending for ex-felons in spite of pre-release treatment .
- Focus of intervention should be on addressing the criminological needs of offenders rather than on faith / nonfaith-based divide.

Limitations

Use of archival data contains the risks of inaccurate and biased data (internal validity impaired) - data collected on "best effort" basis.

No national and gender diversities in the samples.

Small matched samples available for "treatment-type" analysis affected the accuracy of the regression estimation

Recommendations

Include findings in the body of knowledge: it contributes to the evidence suggesting that reentry treatment can minimize the odds of recidivism for a released prisoner.

Use findings as a background evidence to drive advocacy & policy change to improve prisoner reentry efforts.

Findings may inform further studies to identify a more effective reentry type for optimize resource usage.

Findings to encourage similar studies in other Nigerian prison commands to enhance external validity