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Skill Acquisition Opportunities and Life Challenges of Incarcerated Juveniles in Correctional Centers in Kogi State

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Abstract
This study investigated skill acquisition and life challenges of incarcerated juveniles in correctional centers in Kogi State. Specifically, the study assessed skill acquisition, personal challenges, and basic juvenile rehabilitation requirements. The population consist of 87 juvenile's inmates and 1,051 staff. The sample size comprises of all the 87 incarcerated juveniles and 285 staff. Juvenile structured questionnaire (JSQ) was used to collect data. Random and purposive sampling techniques were used to reach a representative sample size for staff. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation. Findings on skill acquisition showed that fashion designer (x̄2.60±0.49), laundry (x̄2.47±0.50), cooking (x̄2.89±0.41). Results of home background and personal challenges of incarcerated juveniles revealed that, peer pressure (x̄5.00±0.00), un met needs for physical support and psychological support (x̄4.26±1.32), financial support (x̄4.06±1.60), over-bearing/ parenting (x̄3.95±1.28), lack of family support (x̄3.90±1.55), threats from other relatives (x̄3.70±1.50), aggressiveness and heightened emotionality (x̄3.84±1.48) accounted for more. On basic juvenile requirements, all the twelve scaled items were readily acceptable but trained social workers (x̄4.97±0.18), learners should be allowed to select skill of interest (x̄4.95±0.25), proper funding (x̄4.84±0.37), clean and spacious environment (x̄4.78± 0.42), adequate counselors (x̄4.77±0.42) and provision of juvenile justice system (x̄4.37±0.34) topped. In conclusion, correctional centers in Kogi lack adequate skill-acquisition opportunities and perceived rehabilitation requirements for incarcerated juvenile. These inadequacies have serious effects on social rehabilitation program for juvenile correctional centers. The study therefore recommends that, to equip juveniles and convicted inmates with the necessary survival skills after incarceration, Government should provide adequate skill acquisition for good rehabilitation programs. Parents should provide basic necessities of life at home and be interested in knowing the kinds of friends and behavior wards indulge. Government should also organize adequate training and retraining for staff saddled with the responsibility of rehabilitating incarcerated juveniles in Kogi state periodically on basic managerial skills based on juveniles' personal unique characteristics.

Key Words: Skill Acquisition, Career Opportunities, Life Challenges, Juvenile Delinquency, Incarceration.

Introduction
A child in Nigeria is said to be a juvenile if the child is below the age of 18 years. Juvenile delinquency is an act of participating in an offence or act which is unlawful (Verma & Rawat, 2018). This can lead to their arrest and eventual trial and incarceration. Juvenile incarceration is the confinement of minors in detention centers, jails, or correctional facilities due to criminal offenses or legal violations. During incarceration, juvenile is rehabilitated through learning different skills. Juvenile Skill acquisition opportunities involves individuals to learn and develop new skills provided by an individual or institution. Acquisition of skills has been worldly recognized as a legitimate tool towards employment creation and the sustained economic development. (Usman, *et al*, 2026). It means assisting people to overcome obstacles which might prevent juveniles from

achieving potentials in life. Therefore, for an incarcerated juveniles to be re-integrated into the society well prepared to live a life after correction, the availability of functional skills acquisition during incarceration and rehabilitation becomes imperative.

Almost every aspect of the juvenile justice system dealing with children in Nigeria is in conflict with the law, from arrest until final disposition. The well-being, welfare and best interests of young offenders are not adequately preserved and protected. According to Mboho and Udousoro (2014), Nigeria Juvenile Justice System is dysfunctional and respective correctional institutions are poorly equipped, hence cannot serve the statutory functions. While the important first step of legislative reform has been embarked upon, the other problems still loom large.

The state of basic requirements for an adequate social rehabilitation program is unclear. These are the resources that could remedy, heal or bring a turn-around in the psyche or lives of these unfortunate children. According to Nasiru (2019), the purpose of establishing correctional service was to reform jailed offenders. A situation where the system lacks training facilities, the inmates can become more hardened than they were before incarceration. Nasiru (2019), maintained that the skill acquisition facilities at Ankpa, Dekina and Idah Correctional centres are still old and there is no improvement in the structures. Aregbshola (2021), report that despite Nigeria's legal framework and stated commitment to international charters and conventions to protect young offenders, these rights are being consistently negated. More children who should have been reformed are either traumatized or hardened in crime. Bappi *et al*. (2021), identified deficient entrepreneurial training facilities and poor funding as the major factors affecting entrepreneurial training of inmates in correctional centers in Nigeria.

The Beijing Rules (2015), state clearly that "children in custody shall receive care, protection and all necessary individual assistance; social, educational, vocational, psychological, medical and physical that may require in view of age, sex and personality". These requirements demand sufficient infrastructure, as well as facilities to assist the access to families and any external professional support that may be involved in the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of children back into communities. Victims of juvenile delinquency are associated with faulty family structures and other societal life challenges. For instance, Peters, (2024) revealed that family structure significantly influences adolescent engagement in delinquent behaviors, with adolescents from single-parent households or non-traditional family arrangements exhibiting higher rates of delinquency. In a similar study, school factors including poor classroom management, inadequate monitoring by school authorities, unconducive learning environments, and teacher incompetence; and peer factors such as peer pressure, association with delinquent peers, and exposure to negative social media significantly influenced juvenile delinquency among students (Idachaba, *et, al*, 2026).

Parental style was also identified as one of the largest predictors of juvenile delinquency as it describes the attitudes and behaviors that parents express while raising children (Bi, *et al* 2018). Parenting styles and practices such as being absent and using digital devices for child rearing and virtual parenting has contributed to the increase of juvenile delinquency. Most often these youths fall into the wrong hands as a result of peer pressure and are placed into the rehabilitation center, which is supposed to be a place for correction, training and re integration into the society. Therefore, the correctional center is supposed to be equipped with functional facilities and equipment for the transmission of skills that are not only saleable but available to be self - employed and to be employers of labor, (Natala, 2021)

The damage done to victims of juvenile delinquency, occasioned by challenges associated with incarceration could be reversed only if the correctional centers are pro-active, vibrant and that could bar offenders from a recurrence of the crime committed. This again, brings to the fore, the need to explore the status of the social rehabilitation programs and facilities. Idachaba, *et, al*, (2026) have focused on the causes of juvenile delinquency in Kogi state, but there is a paucity of research on

availability of skill acquisition opportunities available in correctional centers in Kogi state. This necessitates the need for this study.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate skill acquisition opportunities available to, and life challenges associated with incarcerated juveniles in correctional centers in Kogi State. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives

1. determined skill acquisition available in correctional centers in Kogi state.
2. identified home background and personal challenges of incarcerated juveniles in the correctional centers in Kogi State.
3. established basic juvenile rehabilitation requirements for a social program in correctional centers in Kogi state.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This design was selected because it enables the collection of data from many different individuals at a single point in time.

Area of Study

Kogi state is the area of study. It is made of 21 local government areas (LGAs). Seven LGAs out of the 21 LGAs have correctional centers. The study was conducted in the six local governments with juveniles' correctional centers (Ankpa, Dekina, Idah, Okene, Kabba & Kotonkarifi). These LGAs were chosen because of the frequency of juveniles' related crimes and poor juvenile rehabilitation within correctional facilities. The six correctional centers are located in the headquarters of these local governments. These centers host both adults and juvenile inmates associated with poor structures surrounded with residential environment.

Population of the Study

The total population of the study comprised of all the 87 juveniles incarcerated and 1,051 staff in six correctional locations and centers in Kogi state (Nigeria Correctional Service. 2022). Most of the staff of all six correctional centers under study were transferred from different part of Nigeria to serve in Kogi state.

Sample of the Study

The six correctional centers housing juveniles were identified among the seven centers in the state. Each of these centers is located in a respective local government area**.** Purposive sampling technique was used to select incarcerated juveniles and a simple random sampling technique based on the proportion of population of which, each target group were assigned numbers through lottery which make it easier in selecting desired staff across each of the six local government centers. Sample size determination was not performed for juveniles because of the limited population size. The sample size for juveniles was all the 87 incarcerated and awaiting trial in Kogi correctional centers. Sample size of 285 staff has been obtained from the chart developed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). These amount to a combined sample size of 372 respondents. Each of the six LGAs correctional staff were calculated based on the proportion of the population per LGAs centers.

Instrument for Data Collection

Juvenile structured questionnaire (JSQ) was used for data collection. It was developed through extensive literature review based on the objectives of the study. Some items were made up of a 5-point Likert response scale of preference including, 5(Agree=SA), 4(Agree=A), 3(Undecided = UD), 2(Disagree=D) and 1(Strongly Disagree=SD) with an acceptable mean limit of 3.00 and above. Some scaled into 3-point preference including; 3(available /functional); 2(available /not functional); 1(unavailable) with the mean range of 3.00-2.5 considered as available/functional, 1.5-2.4 as available/not functional and 1.00-1.4 as not available. The questionnaire was validated by three experts. Reliability indices of .820 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha in a non-participatory sample in a different location.

Preliminary visits were made to the selected correctional centers to obtain permission/ ethical approval to conduct the study. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered and collected back on the spot. Eighty-seven (87) copies of the questionnaire were given to incarcerated juveniles and 313 to staff and all retrieved. 372 (93%) correctly filled the instrument while, incomplete responses to critical questions or sections left unanswered were not collated.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies, mean and standard deviation. The decision rule of a mean above 3.00 was acceptable while less than 3.00 was taken as unacceptable.

Results

Table1 shows the findings from 285 staff on skill acquisition available in the six correctional centres. Findings revealed that, fashion designer (x̄2.60±0.49), laundry (x̄2.47±0.50), cooking (x̄2.89±0.41), were available and functional, while other skills were either not available or available but not functional.

Table 1: Mean Rating of staff on Skill Acquisition Available in Correctional Centres in Kogi State

Skills Acquisition	$\bar{X}$	*SD*	Remark
E**ducationa**l			
1. Schooling	2.43	0.50	ANF
2. Debate	1.00	0.00	NA
3. Speech writing	1.00	0.00	NA
Sport			
1. Football	2.30	0.46	ANF
2. Lawn tennis	1.30	0.00	NA
4. Handball	1.00	0.00	NA
5. Athletics	1.00	0.00	NA
5. Volleyball	1.00	0.00	NA
6. Basket ball	1.00	0.00	NA
Carpentry and Welding			
1. Roofing	1.96	0.18	ANF
2. Lumbering	1.97	0.18	ANF
3. Metal fabrication	1.04	0.18	NA
4. Metal/Aluminium Doors and Windows Construction	1.00	0.00	NA
5. Smash Repairer	1.00	0.00	NA
Building / Design			
1. Mencing	1.07	0.26	NA
2. Block moulding	1.07	0.00	NA
3. Graphic Designer	1.00	0.26	NA
Electrical / Mechanical			
1. Wiring	2.00	0.00	ANF
2. Vulcanizer	1.00	0.00	NA
4. Motor/ Bike Repairer	2.00	0.00	ANF
5. Solar panel installation	1.04	0.18	NA
Fashion and Styles			
1. Fashion designer	2.60	0.49	AF
2. Modelling	1.10	0.39	NA
3. Barbing	2.40	0.61	ANF
4. Embroidery	1.13	0.50	NA
6. Over lucking	1.07	0.37	NA
7. Knitting	1.00	0.00	NA
8. Weaving	1.18	0.46	NA
9. Laundry	2.47	0.50	AF
10. Hair stylist	1.60	0.56	ANF
11. Make-up artist	1.00	0.00	NA
Business			
1. Cooking	2.89	0.41	AF
2. Cake design	1.00	0.00	NA

3. Shoe making	1.00	0.00	NA
4. Bead making	1.04	0.18	NA
5. Farming	1.92	0.51	ANF
6. Tiller	1.00	0.00	NA
7. Bole Hole Digging	1.22	0.60	NA
8. Photographing	1.00	0.00	NA

Key: AF= Available and functional, ANF= Available not functional, NA =Not Available

Table 2 reveals the results from the 87 incarcerated juveniles on the home background and personal characteristics of the inmates. Peer pressure (x̄5.00±0.00), Unmet needs and physical support (x̄4.26±1.32) accounted for the highest life challenges of those incarcerated, while financial support (x̄4.06±1.60), over-bearing/ parenting (x̄3.95±1.28), lack of family support (x̄3.90±1.55), threats from other relatives (x̄3.70±1.50), aggression and heightened emotionality (x̄3.84±1.48) are home background factors and personal challenges of incarcerated juveniles.

Table 2: Mean Rating of incarcerated juveniles on the home background and Personal Challenges of Incarcerated Juveniles in Kogi State

	Items	$\bar{x}$	*SD*
1.	Financial challenges	4.06	1.60
2.	Lack of Family support	3.90	1.55
3.	Poor Self esteem	2.56	1.63
4.	Lack of Home Care	3.64	1.68
5.	Aggressiveness and Heightened Emotionality	3.84	1.48
6.	Poor Schooling	2.33	1.82
7.	Joblessness	1.00	0.00
8.	Lack of Basic Needs and Physical Support	4.26	1.32
9.	Poor Parents Background	2.87	2.01
10.	Poor Housing and Living off the Street	2.40	1.79
11.	Peer Pressure	5.00	0.00
12.	Over-bearing / Parenting	3.95	1.28
13.	Natural Disaster	1.18	0.84
14.	Poor Health	1.18	0.84
14.	Lack of Access to Quality and Enough Food	2.38	1.81
15.	Threat from other Relatives	3.70	1.50
16.	Migration	1.18	0.84

Table 3 shows mean rating of the 285 staff on the basic requirements for a rehabilitation program. All 12 items were readily acceptable with trained social workers (x̄4.97±0.18), optional acquisition skills availability (x̄4.95±0.25) as critical; provision of juvenile justice system (x̄4.37±0.34) reports the lowest.

Table 3: Mean Rating on Basic Requirements in Rehabilitation Programs for incarcerated Juveniles in Kogi State

	Basic Requirements	$\bar{x}$	*SD*
1.	Provision of Juvenile Justice system	4.37	0.34
2.	Observation homes or special homes at many correctional centres	4.60	0.49
3.	Adequate counsellors	4.77	0.42
4.	Adequate psychiatrists	4.54	0.50
5.	Medical personnel	4.64	0.37
6.	Trained social workers	4.97	0.18

7.	Provision of physical infrastructures	4.66	0.47
8.	Clean and spacious environment	4.78	0.42
9.	Adequate equipment and tools	4.69	0.46
10.	Proper funding	4.84	0.37
11.	Design should be convenient with peaceful features that allow rehabilitation	4.70	0.46
12.	Learners should be allowed to select skill of interest	4.95	0.25

Discussions

Results on the skill acquisition in correctional centers in Kogi state revealed that, fashion designer ($\bar{x}$2.60±0.49), laundry ($\bar{x}$2.47±0.50), cooking ($\bar{x}$2.89±0.41), were available and functional, while other skills were either available but not functional or not available in all the correctional centers. These results show the level of infrastructural deficit in the selected correctional centers in Kogi state. These findings are similar to the results of Nweke and Ajah, (2017), who studied the challenges of vocational training of prison inmates in Nigeria: a study of Abakaliki and Awka correctional centers. The results revealed that, vocational facilities do not exist in most Nigerian correctional systems including barbing and hair dressing saloon (52.1%), auto repairs and mechanics (79.5%), shoe making (65.8%), fashion designing (84.0%), carpentry and electrical repairs (91.2% respectively). Also, the recreational facilities that were lacking include: table tennis (64.8%), basketball (77.6%) and volleyball (84.7%). The report further showed that the only recreational facility available is football (82.4%). This shows clearly that Kogi state correctional centers and Nigerian by extension lacks adequate and basic functional skill acquisition facilities for good social rehabilitation of inmates.

Results on home background and personal challenges of incarcerated juveniles in Kogi state revealed peer pressure ($\bar{x}$5.00±0.00) and lack basic needs and physical support from the family ($\bar{x}$4.26±1.32 topping. This result revealed the influence of friends and family failure of not providing the basic needs of incarcerated juveniles in Kogi state. This is similar to the work done by Nurhidayah, *et, al*, (2021), who investigated relationship between peer pressure and bullying behavior in early adolescents. It was also observed that once an adolescent becomes part of a group, they become susceptible to peer pressure and pleasure. Peer relationships significantly influenced juvenile delinquency (Hayyu, *et al,* 2025). Also, Eremie, Ogechinyere and Augustine (2019) reported from a study on the influence of parental involvement on adolescents' juvenile delinquency in Ahiazu-Mbaisi Local Government Area of Imo State: Implication for Counseling, found that, poor family environment prevailed among the families of delinquent adolescents when compared with the positive family atmosphere among the non-delinquent behavior of adolescent families. The results further revealed that poor family environment was marked by family fights, less communication with the father, alcoholism, and incompetency in dealing with adolescent delinquent behavior. This is an evident that families who fail to support children with basic necessity of life will definitely witness children finding shelter somewhere to survive. This can force children to join bad gang who will in turn become leaders and mentors of other bad groups. For instance, Chau *et al*, (2025) in survey of family circumstances and the law violations of juvenile delinquency in Vietnam, observed that unstable family realities, characterized by broken homes, lack of parental supervision, and demonstrations of criminal behavior, considerably increase the chances of youth offending. Therefore, parents supporting young children will not only help to prevent crime but also provide an avenue for children to attain their natural genetic potentials.

The result on basic requirements for rehabilitation programs for incarcerated juveniles in Kogi state shows that, training of social workers ($\bar{x}$4.97) accounted for the best requirement for juvenile rehabilitation. Training and retraining are one of the sure ways of improving skills of individuals shouldered with responsibilities to provide adequate rehabilitation and intervention programs.

Training and retraining of correctional staff are the only key way to keep pace with the expansion of existing ideas and the current development and growth of new technology as well as industrial revolution. Similar results were reported by Hassan and Rosly (2021) who worked on juvenile inmates who enrolled in vocational education and training in correctional institutions found that, majority of participants hold more positive beliefs about vocational education and training that the institutions made available were good. Furthermore, Ryan *et al.* (2022) pointed out that the role of the prison officer is complex and challenging. In order to discharge their duties effectively, prison officers require relevant and comprehensive training and education upon recruitment and throughout their working career. Nasiru (2019) observed that government should provide training workshops for Nigerian correctional service in Kogi state to enable the inmates and staff to have access to reformation skills rather than allowing to be more hardened. Therefore, for a good rehabilitation output, the relevance of continuous training of correctional centers staff becomes imperative.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Skill acquisition is fundamental to post – incarceration adjustment and integration into the society. This study has unraveled the state of the rehabilitation centers for juveniles. It is a major concern due to the increase in the rate of juveniles' delinquency and involvement in minor and major criminal activities. These young people therefore need to be equipped for life after incarceration. These inadequacies found in the state of equipment and facilities have serious implications for the social rehabilitation programs extending to staff training also. Based on this conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should provide adequate skill acquisitions opportunities for good rehabilitation programs for incarcerated juveniles in correctional centers in Kogi state. furthermore, Government should provide adequate training and retraining periodically and experts be invited to teach basic managerial skills based on juveniles' personal unique characteristics for correctional centers staff saddled with the responsibility of rehabilitating incarcerated juveniles in Kogi.
2. Parents should provide basic necessities of life at home as well as be interested in knowing the kinds of friends and behavior wards indulge.

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