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## **Female Prison Structure in Nigeria: A Case Study of Women Prison, Kirikiri, Apapa, Lagos**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The analysis of the Nigerian Prison Services (NPS) reveal the challenges of the justice's system in Nigeria. The main goal prison services are reformatory following the ethical principles that guide the profession, however, this paper is reviewing the prison structure of the female prison at Kirikiri, Lagos. Being the first female prison in the country, the structure put in place has a lot of influence on the development structure of future female prisons. The findings of this study will highlight the good practices that should be encouraged and the practices that need to be changed. Incarceration in itself both punishes the offender and protects others, meaning that crime offenders need to pay for their crime and innocent people should be protected from the threat they pose, and they could also be rehabilitated in prison to better live in the society. Inferably, prison time has its benefits both for the incarcerated and the others outside of the prison. The knowledge of how the prison system works is very important to the society because it will help everyone and help reduce the fear of prison. The danger of this fear is that anybody can suffer it even though they have done nothing illegal in their lives. Sufferers usually have obsessive thoughts about what's life is like in prison, and many times the thoughts are very negative, traumatic having health challenges and many times led to tragic ends

**Key Words:** Female, Fear, Prison, Correction, Infrastructure

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#### Journal Reference Format:

Mbagwu, J.U. (2019): Female Prison Structure in Nigeria: A Case Study of Women Prison, Kirikiri, Apapa, Lagos. Journal of Behavioural Informatics, Social-Cultural and Development Research. Vol. 5 . No. 3, Pp 13-20. [www.isteams/behaviouralinformaticsjournal](http://www.isteams/behaviouralinformaticsjournal)

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The analysis of the Nigerian Correctional Services (NCS) reveal the challenges of the justice's system in Nigeria. The main goal prison services is reformatory following the ethical principles that guide the profession. However, this paper is reviewing the prison structure of the female prison at Kirikiri, Lagos. Being the first female prison in the country, the structure put in place has a lot of influence on the development structure of future female prisons. The findings of this study will highlight the good practices that should be encouraged and the practices that need to be changed.

#### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Incarceration in itself both punishes the offender and protects others, meaning that crime offenders need to pay for their crime and innocent people should be protected from the threat they pose, and they could also be rehabilitated in prison to better live in the society. Inferably, prison time has its benefits both for the incarcerated and the others outside of the prison. The knowledge of how the prison system works is very important to the society because it will help everyone and help reduce the fear of prison. However, the problem this study is focusing is *cancerphobia* which is the fear of prison.

The danger of this fear is that anybody can suffer it even though they have done nothing illegal in their lives. Sufferers usually have obsessive thoughts about what's life is like in prison, and many times the thoughts are very negative, traumatic having health challenges and many times led to tragic ends.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this research are listed below

1. To provide the historical development of Nigeria prison Services
2. To identify the offenses leading inmates' incarceration
3. To describe the structure of Kirikiri Female Prison
4. To highlight the rehabilitation programs of the Kirikire Female Prison
5. To determine the impact of the prison services on the experience of the inmates, especially the out-going inmates
6. To explain the danger of delayed justices process
7. To suggest programs that can help improve on the services of the prison

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

Analyses of the fear of serving prison time around the world is mostly responsible for why people are falling victims of injustices of various forms. Many 'criminal' lawyers are manipulating the corrupt justices' system with the aid of the police are forcing victims to give away their rightful properties because they have been threatened with a jail time. The fear of the unknown that they will meet in the prison is driving people away from fighting for their justices' which this paper is out to address. The experiences, opportunities for rehabilitation, schooling opportunities and minimum health checks and services and the available civil societies/religious programs available in the prison services need to be highlighted so that people are not too scared to walk away from their rights out of fear. To a large extent, the Kirikiri Female Prison Apapa, Lagos is not as bad as it is being presented. This study is therefore important as it will encourage the Prison administration to do more and better in their service delivery and also help victims of the justice system to rise up to the corrupt police officers and criminal lawyers in the country.

## 2. HISTORY OF NIGERIA PRISON SERVICES

According to Orakwe, (2010) the origin of modern Prisons Service in Nigeria can be traced to 1861 when Western-type prison was established in Nigeria and Lagos was declared a colony. The acting governor of the Lagos colony and who was then a prominent British merchant in Lagos, formed a Police Force of about 25 constables. Shortly after this, in 1863 four courts were established in Lagos and they are: **Police Court** to resolve petty disputes, a **Criminal Court** to try the more serious cases, a **Slave Court** to try cases arising from slave trading abolition and **Commercial Court** to resolve disputes among merchants and traders. The establishments of these courts meant that prisons were needed to complete the system. In subsequent years, more prisons were established in different parts of the country.

### 2.1 Nigeria Prisons Today

Before 1968, the prisons services followed a Native Authority regional structure, where the Northern and Southern Nigeria had different leaderships, which was abolished in 1968 leading to the unification of the Prisons Service in Nigeria. This marked the beginning of Nigerian Prisons Service which government white paper was released in 1971, followed in 1972 by Decree No.9 of 1972. Decree No.9 charged the prison with taking custody of those legally detained, identifying causes of their behaviour and retraining them to become useful citizens in the society. In addition to the Director running the prison, the Decree permitted "three principal agencies or divisions performing different roles to enable (the prisons) execute its programme expeditiously and achieve its goals and they are Technical, Inspectorate and Welfare with each unit under a Deputy Director of Prisons.

The expansions created led to further changes that between 1974 and 1980 a group of officers, mostly pivotal teachers were recruited as social welfare officers to take on adjustment-related programmes and rehabilitation of prisoners. Also, professional Nurses and Doctors were recruited to beef up the medical staff strength as well as expertise. The reorganization of 1986 led to the creation of the Customs, Immigrations and Prisons Board and centralization of the administrations of these paramilitary Services in the Board and there was also the removal of the Services from the Civil Service in 1992. Another major expansion was made in 1993 when its modest three Directorates were further divided into six Directorates. Nigerian Prison Services now has a command structure that boast of 8 Zonal commands, 36 State Commands, 1 FCT Command, 144 Prisons including farm centres and 83 Satellite Prisons. It also has four Training Schools, one Staff College and 2 Borstal Institutions

## **2.2 Female Prisons in Nigeria**

Even though, prisons services in Nigeria can be traced back to 1861, the first exclusive female prison for only female inmates in Kirikiri known as Kirikiri Female Prison was established in 1963. The gap in time could be due to the fact that there are very few women inmates in Nigeria to discourage the establishment of women exclusive prison. According to prisonstudies.org women inmates constitute just 2% of total prison inmates in Nigeria, while men constitute 98% as at August 2019. The Kirikiri Female Prison was the only female prison in Nigeria until 2017 March when the second one (Numan Old Prison) was established in Yola, Adamawa state in the northeastern Nigeria. This announcement was made the Controller of NPS in Adamawa, Mr. Peter Tenkwa. He said that the development followed the ongoing restructuring of the Nigeria Prison Services to be gender sensitive. According to him,

“The Numan Old Prison in Adamawa is now the second female prison in Nigeria with a total capacity of 400 inmates; currently there are six inmates in the prison,”

Mr. Tenkwa said that only ten out of the seventeen prisons in the state were operational as seven were destroyed by the Boko Haram insurgency when he assumed duty in June 2016. Although statistics has it that women constitute just 2% of the total population, studies have shown that there is a rising number of incarcerated women in prisons (Okwendi et al, 2014). Other scholars have identified factors responsible for this increase to include inequitable conditions such as socio-economic status, political and cultural factors contribute to the trend of women's increased prison incarceration, across cultures, socio-economic class, gender and ethnicity (Bambra et al, 2005).

## **3. FACTORS LEADING TO DETENTION**

According Kazeem (2017) report from Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics suggests that from 2011 to 2015, shows that 72.5% of Nigeria's total prison population are inmates serving time while awaiting trial and without being sentenced due to flaws in Nigeria's criminal justice system with proceedings often going on for years without conclusion. There are cases of inmates spending over a decade in a prison in Nigeria's southeast without being tried. Apart from the problems from lengthy court proceedings, NBS report also highlights a worrying culture of arbitrary arrests by Nigerian law enforcement agencies. There are cases of local police officers randomly arresting people for frivolous offenses such as “loitering”. In an effort to secure their release, family member Incarceration s of those arrested are expected to pay bail fees dictated by the police in an elaborate racket. In other cases, inmates land in prisons on mere suspicion of committing crime, and not an actual conviction. Arrests over petty crime such as shoplifting and traffic offenses also often see people land in maximum security prisons without being charged.

In an effort to obtain information on offenses that brought inmates to Female Prison Kirikiri, participants freely explained as one inmate killed her mother due to drug addiction. She was high on drugs when her mother tried to stop her from going out late at night and she pushed her away from the door, she fell and she left to late night club only to come back after three days and found her lying on the spot she left her three days ago dead. Out of fear she raised alarm and this led to her arrest and eventual incarceration for nine years as the time of this study.

Another inmate said kidnapping of two children brought her to prison, although, she explained that she did not kidnap the children but was asked to bring them to a location which led to her being accused of kidnapping, and she has been there for four years and still there at the time of conducting this study. However, there is another case of kidnapping which is more absurd. This lady is a widow and mother of three. According to her, she was coming from the club late at night, drunk and was arrested by the police and taken to police station. In the morning, she was asked to pay some money for her bail, which she did not have and could not get relatives to come to her rescue. She further said that the police threatened to accuse her of kidnapping which accusation she did not understand. Few days after detaining her the police station, she was charged to magistrate court in Ogba, part of Lagos and a woman was at the court and testified against her for kidnapping her child who she is carrying on her. She was so confused about the charge as she did not know the woman and the child. She has been detained at the prison for seven months and has been to court few times and the accuser does not come to court and she is still detained. She is always crying and thinking about her children whose welfare she is worried about as their father is dead.

There are cases of prostitution. These young women said that they were randomly picked up around Oshodi late at night and the next day, they were charged to court and sent to prison. One of the girls was crying non-stop and the court day, she could not go because of no transport fare and other inmates have to contribute for her to be able to go to court. Luckily, she was released and did not come back to prison. In addition to the women prostitution cases, another factor bringing a lot of these women to prison is *illegal raiding*. This is when the police suddenly ambush petty traders (akara/yam/sweet potatoes/fish/chicken fryers) along the Apapa Waterside and take them to court the next morning and they land in prison. Most of them are not Nigerians and barely have relations who could help meet with their bail conditions.

One frequent case bringing many young women to prison is house girl/ sales girl or domestic servants' case. There are very many young girls languishing in prison for issues concerning stealing from their *madams*. Young girls who should be writing their O'Level examinations are just wasting away at the prison. These cases of stealing are not realistic. How can a woman leave a business of over 20 million Naira in the hand of an eighteen-year-old? Travel for three months and conclude that 11 million Naira worth of goods are missing and the sales girl is arrested and sent to prison. Many of them are there for months and years, and painfully, the accusers do not come to court anymore, and the Judge could not throw out the case. Some house girls are accused of stealing laptops, cloths, biscuits, and ridiculous items that cannot be substantiated, and they are there without any plan of resolving them. Although, there are cases that deserve jail times. There was a case of a woman who got 22 million Naira loan without collateral. This is an obvious case of hardened criminal. But she could not commit this crime alone. The bank manager who approved this loan *without* collateral sure is an accessory to fraud. But, one BIG CASE is the one involving a woman who has been at the prison for six years and the case does not go to court. She was arrested at Muritala Mohammed Airport, Ikeja on her way from London where she lived and she is been there for more than six years and her case cannot be resolved.

#### **4. THE STRUCTURE OF KIRIKIRI FEMALE PRISON**

The prison is structured like every government institution with the leadership hierarchically place led by the DCP Lizzy Ekpendu supported by other officers. The offices are built away from the rooms where the inmates are housed. The cells are over populated to the extent that some inmates sleep o. the floor. The inmates who are sick are not separated from the others and even mothers with babies are in the same room with every other inmate and this is very challenging. People are constantly sick as they share facilities which should not be. Some of the houses are so old and are not convenient. There are different units – the Psychology Unit which attends to inmates as they are encouraged to visit it and get the officers talk to the people and check on their psychological disposition. Being in prison could be very traumatizing and getting an officer speak to that person can be very helpful.

The medical which is further divided into two major units – the general area where medications are dispensed and patients are attended to, while the second area is very strategic which is very important. This particular department conducts tests on HIV, pregnancy and TB on all incoming inmates on the first and latest second day of arrival to make sure everyone's status is known and medication can commence. Another important programme in the prison is concerning food. Apart from the general kitchen food provided in which inmates are conscripted to cook, there are other a little expensive one where inmates could order for food which is more delicious. Efforts are made by the prison leadership to provide variety for the inmates although it is always in short supply. The hairdressing salon was very pleasant to know the prison provides the service for the inmates. Inmates are encouraged to look good and the price is very competitive. The salon is run by the wardress but the actual services are provided by the inmates which is a great idea. Some of the inmates who are hairdressers work there, and some who wish to learn the trade are encouraged to do so. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) programme is very laudable. The presence of the computer center for the inmates to do their assignments is very good as it is very rehabilitating. An inmate who has six years jail term who runs a four-year course while serving jail term, does not look like she went to prison, but school. This is the case of one inmate.

The Welfare Unit is one of the most thoughtful unit provided by the Prison. This unit helps in the provision of telephone services. In terms of programme structure, there are still some of them that needs to be reviewed. Getting people to kneel down when they are processing their admission into the prison is very humiliating and the manner with which the wardresses speak to some inmates can really be demoralizing. However, it is proper to mention the efforts of the Officer in charge, DCP Ekpendu who is working hard to improve on the living conditions of the prison. There are cases of her funding the legal fees of some inmates to enable them go home. Helping out with improved sanitary conditions. Allowing organizations, both charity and religious to come in regularly to attend to the inmates.

## **5. REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES OF THE KIRIKIRE FEMALE PRISON**

Rehabilitation of prison inmates is the goal of reforming and/or rehabilitating an offender and this is done by equipping him/her with the necessary skills or training to enable him/her function as a law-abiding citizen upon reintegration to the society. Reviewing what programmes the Kirikiri Female prison has for the inmates in 2018 shows good efforts considering where we are coming from as a nation as recorded by Omoni and Ijeh (2009) who argued that provisions made for qualitative and vocational education of prisoners were inadequate. As mentioned above, the Prison's educational programme via NOUN is very rich. The inmates are regularly taken to the Center for their studies at the Kirikiri Male Maximum Prison. Computers are provided for them to submit their assignments via the internet which is provided for them. Some teachers come to prison to teach inmates and prepare them for external examinations. Any prisoner who is sober and will to acquire skills can do so as vocational training programs are provided. The salon is equipped and managed by inmates, especially those whose cases have been judged and they will be staying there for some time.

Apart from vocational training preparing them for re-integration into the society for economic self-reliance, there are other forms of rehabilitation programmes which are spiritual and psychological. Worship centers are provided for both the Christians and the Moslems and visitors are allowed in regularly to come in and admonish the inmates. Words of encouragements are regularly preached to them and prayers are said regularly. Testimonies are shared which are very uplifting and desire to get suicidal are constantly discouraged. All the rehabilitation programmes aim at easy reintegration of the inmates back into the society. These visitors come to the prison with gifts of food, toiletries, sanitary wales and cloths that when these inmates get there without cloths, they are encouraged to go to the welfare unit for change of clothes. To a certain extent, new inmates' initial reactions inside the prison is the view of being in a girls' boarding school. There was an inmate who was arrested at Oshodi who confessed that she nearly killed herself when she was told that she was going to prison only to be surprised at the relaxed environment inside the prison.



She vowed to tell her friends not to be scared of prison at the detriment of protecting or fighting for their rights, after all prison is not the end of life.

## **6. DANGER OF DELAYED JUSTICES PROCESS**

Most of the inmates at the Kirikiri Female prison are there because of delay in the criminal justice process. There are very many cases of this kind. There were cases of inmates in the prison for over six years without their cases making any meaningful progress at the courts. There is a particular woman whose judge do not come to court. Even efforts have been made to get the media to interview her and give her visibility hoping that it will change her situation, but the reverse is the case. Many women have stayed nine, ten years without knowing when the case will end. Another group suffering from the poor justice system is the very petty cases of house helps who have been alleged to have stolen their 'madam's' cloths, money and sales girls who are accused of stealing cloths and shoes from their 'ogas'. There are many of these girls languishing in the prison for three, four years waiting for court judgements that no one knows when it will come. The madams are no longer coming to court and the judges are not using their discretion to throw out such cases and setting free these young girls. The implications are severe. Many of them have been recruited by older inmates who turn them into maids in the prison. They call them mothers and they in turn call them daughters. It is a very pathetic set up. Even, some women who were arrested by the police and accused of kidnapping without any evidence are held for years and many of them are losing their minds.

These findings are further confirmed by the reports of the prevailing situations of majority of the prisons in Nigeria as captured by Opafunso ZO, Adepoju OO (2016) in their recent study. The delays in the administration of criminal justice is one of the major causes of the congestion of the prison cells. According to Opafunso ZO, Adepoju OO (2016) 97% of the inmates in prison are there because of the delays in the court systems. Many times, inmates are taken to courts with the judges being absent and even when present, they are issuing unending adjournments, thereby leading to the problem of overcrowding of the prisons.

## **7. IMPACT OF THE PRISON SERVICES ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INMATES**

Except for very few inmates, most of them have unpleasant experiences due to congestion in the cells coupled with the long stay due to the delays in the criminal justice system. The big halls house many of the inmates and the sanitary situation is very bad due to old age making inmates to manually evacuate waste which is unhealthy. Many of the inmates sleep on the floor with thin foams making movement difficult and leading to fighting and quarreling most of the time and some of them are HIV positive and not separated from others. When these fights break out, blood and body fluids mix freely and it is deadly. The health conditions of most of the inmates are not good, especially mentally. The pressure of unending court cases, coupled with the poor feeding is making the inmates lose their minds and landing in hospitals. Many inmates are released via the hospitals and most of the efforts made to rehabilitate them are not realized due to frustration and hopelessness. The emotional state of most of the inmates are bad and dangerous leading to further insecurity.

The idea of reformation or change which is what the prison is set out to do is hardly realized. The young women who are unjustly detained and turned into maids / slaves are very unhappy and the future does not look good. They are even perpetuating further criminality in detention. There are cases of some of them tuning gays and lesbians in side the prison. The harden ones are 'converting' the younger and vulnerable ones into bigger criminality. There is a case of an old lady who has been to different prisons around the country and multiple times to Kirikiri who has turned lesbian out of frustration as she confessed when she was interviewed who was engaging other women in the practice. She was targeting younger girls, as she tries to touch their sensitive parts of the body.

## **8. IMPROVING ON THE SERVICES OF THE PRISON**

The essence of research is to solve societal problems, so is this study. The problem this study is focusing is the fear of detention or Incarceration, but not incarceration on itself but the challenges and problems which are associated with it. If these challenges are removed or reduced to barest minimum, the fear associated with detention will be reduced and people will not be frightened into forgoing their precious possessions because of fear. The challenges identified in the course of this study should be addressed so that the prison services could get better and the essence of its establishment could be realized. Apart of punishment of offenders, another important reason for its creation is the rehabilitation of criminals and re-integration of them back into the society better citizens of the nation. The problem of congestion should be addressed as it is a situation that is dangerous to the prison service. What ever that can be done to reduce the congestion should be done. The prison should regularly advocate for the reduction of the congestion through quick dispensation of justice. The prison service should build more houses to accommodate the inmates while they are awaiting the court judgements.

Also, in accommodating the inmates, the HIV positives and those with communicable diseases should be put in separate cells and efforts should be made to protect the others who are negative. Even though stigmatization is considered, but a program should be developed to take of the health needs of all the inmates. The problem of depression of some inmates should be taken care of by increasing the number of psychologists and their hours of work to help the depressed ones. More social programmes should be provided to distract them form deep thoughts and anxiety. Apart from the psychologists, all wardresses should be trained on empathy and communication so that they could more helpful to the inmates psychologically. The other item that needs attention is infrastructure. The prison yard needs more modern facilities, especially, sanitary wise. The toileting system needs remodeling as it is so difficult to use the toilet as one needs to bend over it and it is very painful to the kneel and practically fall forward in trying to get up.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study highlights the fear and challenges of detention in the Female Prison in Kirikiri, the positives happening in the prison and further recommended solutions to improving the living conditions of the inmates to reduce the fear of detention. Even though prison aims to punish offenders, many of the people there have not been convicted, and therefore should be treated as people who are innocent until proven guilty.

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