

COUNSELLING NEEDS OF EX-CONVICTS AS PERCEIVED BY COUNSELLORS IN RIVERS STATE

By

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Abstract

The study focused on counselling needs of ex-convict as perceived by counselors in Rivers state. Two specific objectives, research questions and one hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used descriptive survey design for the study. A total of 74 participants drawn from a population of 232 practicing counselors in Rivers state were used. They were drawn using snowball sampling technique. The instruments for the data collection was tagged “Counselling for Ex-convict Social Inclusion Questionnaire” (CESIQ). The instrument was designed in a 4-point Likert scale. Validity of the instruments was determined using experts validation process while Cronbach Alpha was used in determining a reliability index of 0.84. Item by item analysis as well as independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis. Findings showed that ex-convicts don’t have educational needs while on the other hand they needed vocational as well as personal and psychosocial help from counselors. Also, there was no difference ($p=0.87>0.05$) in the perception of male and female counselors on counselling needs of ex-convict in Rivers state. Recommendation among others was that the government should set up a rehabilitation and monitoring mechanism that will take care of the needs of the ex-convicts after incarceration.

Keywords: Counselling, Social Inclusion, Ex-Convicts.

Introduction

It is often noted that guidance and counselling is an indispensable tool to the general development of pupils, student and

the entire nation. In line of this fact, the National Policy on Education (2004) notes;

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post primary institutions and counselling officers will feature in teacher Education Programme. (pp. 35)

This statement implies that individuals at all levels of education should be counseled and guided so that they can develop their potentials optimally. Furthermore, most

interesting in the definition is the fact there are a lot of chance that there will be personality maladjustment in the society. Ordu (2013) defined counselling as;

an interaction process, conjoining the counselee who is vulnerable and needs the assistance of the counsellor who is trained and educated to give professional advice and assistance aimed at helping the counselee to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of the environment he lives.

Akinade (2005) also noted that counselling is “the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systematic intervention strategies, that addresses wellness, personal growth or career development as well as pathology. From the foregoing definition, it could be seen that counselling is inevitable especially as it targets the early behavioural and pathological development of the individual.

Mortensen and Schemuller cited in Edna (2009) also noted that counselling is “a person to person process in which one person is helped by another (counsellor) to develop, increase in understanding and ability to solve his or her problem”. The services of counselling lie specifically with guidance counsellors popularly and more recently called counselling psychologist. These are trained personnels who assist troubled or abnormal individuals to overcome their environmental problems that constitute obstacle to their normal development. These problems could be educational personal-social or vocational. As observed, counsellors help client on either individual or group basis because counselling is a process of helping an individual to overcome his problems. Shertzer and Stone in Ekeh (2004) stated that while guidance involves the process of helping individuals to understand

themselves and their world, counselling on the other hand involves helping them to solve or manage their problems. Makinde in Edwards (2008) also noted that counselling is designed to help an individual analyse himself by relating his capabilities, achievements, interest and mode of adjustment to what new decision he has made or has to make.

According to the Hornby (2009), crime is an unlawful act punishable by a state or other authority. The term "crime" does not, in modern criminal law, have any simple and universally accepted definition, though statutory definitions have been provided for certain purposes. The most popular view is that crime is a category created by law; in other words, something is a crime if declared as such by the relevant and applicable law. One proposed definition is that a crime or offence (or criminal offence) is an act harmful not only to some individual but also to a community, society or the state. *Martin (2003) stated that such acts are forbidden and punishable by law.* One can view criminalization as a procedure deployed by society as a preemptive harm-reduction device, using the threat of punishment as a deterrent to anyone proposing to engage in the behavior causing harm. The State becomes involved because governing entities can become convinced that the costs of not criminalizing (through allowing the harms

to continue unabated) outweigh the costs of criminalizing it.

The act of criminalization is synonymous to punishment or conviction. Hornby (2003) defines a convict as a person found guilty of a crime and sentenced by a court" or "a person serving a sentence in prison. Convicts are often also known as "prisoners" or "inmates" or by the slang term "con", while a common label for former convicts, especially those recently released from prison is ex-convict.

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On the other hand and put simply, an ex-convict is one who has been released from the prison custody or one who has been freed by the law after serving some times in the prison. It is worth noting that being a prisoner come with various behavioural dispositions and these behaviours make it possible for people to stigmatize an ex-convict. For instance, it has been observed by the researcher that the prison which supposed to serve as both reprimanding and rehabilitation facility has over the years serves as a training ground for advance murder, drugs and other behaviour. Some inmates have been engage in various anti-social acts like lesbianism as well as homosexuality. These bad behaviours severely have negative effect on the behavior of the convict and most of them manifest this when they are out of prison.

It could be observed that the society in which we live in is full of stigmatization. Going home after being in prison is a very challenging transition for most newly-released prisoners, as well as their families and communities. Recidivism studies show that without intervention, two-thirds

of those released will return to prison within three years. Sadly, prisoners often go back to prison not because they committed a crime, but because they simply violated parole. It could also be that breaking this jinx will require an effective reentry ministry must consider the needs in all areas of the returning citizen's life: social, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, environmental, and physical. These are the most common needs of a newly-released person returning to your community. Some of the needs of the ex-convict involve, the follow-up, safe housing, adequate food, clothing and personal care items, transportation, a church home, emotional and spiritual support, proper identification, access to a phone, medical and dental care; psychiatric care, Alcohol or substance-abuse treatment and rehabilitation

Apart from these basic and mostly physical needs, Stane (2018) stated that most individuals who have difficulties integrating into the societies need adequate counselling in order to adjust fully.

It is also noted that upon release from prison, offenders face a myriad of challenges. These barriers become an impediment to rehabilitation and increase ex-convicts chances of reoffending. Davis et al. (2012) note that the prison environment is markedly different from mainstream society. Upon release, offenders are plunged into an environment that is different from the prison environment and they struggle to cope. Furthermore, given the dynamic and ever-changing nature of society, ex-offenders who spend long periods in prison are released into an environment that is very

different from their former environment before imprisonment. This poses a serious challenge for the reintegration of the offenders. Given that successful reintegration of offenders is central to crime reduction, it is important that the science of offender reintegration be thoroughly understood. Davis (2012) observed that a deepened understanding of offender reintegration allows professionals, the family and communities to better support the adjustment of offenders upon release, which in turn reduces their chances of recidivism. Thurber (1998) notes, with concern, that the reintegration of offenders back into mainstream society is unsettling for many people. There is some marked resistance to accepting offenders. Such stigma defeats efforts to rehabilitate offenders and disadvantages both the offender and society.

According to Rockville (2000), each ex-convict is a unique individual which they tend to bring the following common characteristics or attitudes that needs counselling.

- 1. Feelings of Failure and Hopelessness.** Ex-convicts tend to have a long history of failure behind them and may feel that there is little they can do to change their lives. They may have failed at school, at relationships, and at crime, and may have little faith that they will find a job or that employment will make a difference in their lives.
- 2. Feelings of Alienation from the Mainstream Institutions.** Offenders' experiences with school, health care

facilities, welfare and child welfare offices, lawyers, police, and courts have been primarily negative. Their roles while involved with these institutions tend to be those of supplicant or "wrongdoer." Most often, they are told rather than asked what their needs are and how those needs will be met. With overwhelming caseloads, human service workers are often too pressed for time to listen to offenders or answer questions. Offenders may perceive this as a lack of respect. As they enter substance abuse treatment and vocational rehabilitation, ex-convicts might expect to face more of the same: requirements laid down by overworked people who believe they know best and who do not care whether the "help" they are offering meets clients' real needs or concerns. Offenders often expect to be treated with contempt and hostility; their sensitivity to the attitudes of others can make them seem "touchy" to counselors.

- 3. Incarceration Widens the Educational and Social Gap.** Incarceration leads to "non-acculturation". that is, inmates lose or "fail to acquire some of the habits currently required in the wider society" (Goffman, 1961). The very nature of an all-encompassing institution like a prison is incompatible with the development of the social skills needed to succeed in society at large. The prison inmate undergoes a total loss of autonomy. Others determine every detail of his life--from where he will live and when he wakes up in the

morning, to what he will eat and how he will spend his time. Successful adaptation to prison requires accepting this loss of autonomy. Successful adaptation to prison also requires the individual to accept that the everyday rules of cause and effect and reward and punishment have been suspended. Correction officers can (and do) punish groups of inmates because of the actions of individuals. They can (and do) arbitrarily single out and punish an offender for no reason other than personal dislike. Searches of cells frequently result in destruction of inmate property, including treasured possessions such as photographs and valuables such as typewriters and legal papers. Any privilege earned with good behavior can be revoked at a moment's notice on a trumped-up charge. After years in one facility, an inmate can find herself on a bus to another without notice.

Living in a place where the logic of cause and effect is suspended and justice occurs only by chance can create despair and anger. This, combined with the loss of autonomy, can cause an inmate to stop believing that he is responsible for his life or that anything he does can ever matter. He learns that it is useless to try to control his environment or what happens to him; attempts to plan for the future are almost always futile and frustrating. Yet taking responsibility, making decisions, planning for the future, and following through are precisely the social skills that the released offender needs in order to successfully function

in the community, especially in the world of work.

4. Survival in Prison and Survival Outside Prison Require Two Vastly Different Sets of Skills.

To survive in prison, the offender must get along with other inmates, many of whom are angry and hostile and some of whom are dangerous. Because inmates have no privacy, battle over "turf" is common. Because inmates have no autonomy, power struggles are frequent. Survival in this environment calls on some of the behavior that the offender may have learned before he entered prison (and that may have contributed to being in prison). In some ways, the prison experience reinforces some of the offender's more undesirable social and personal attitudes. After release, offenders may experience emotional shock. Life in prison can be brutal. From the prisoner's perspective, the world outside can take on a rosy glow. The disappointments and difficulties the offender experienced prior to incarceration are often forgotten. As she counts the days to release, her expectations may be high that life on the other side of the wall will be good, if not carefree. However, reality rarely lives up to such expectations. After release, many ex-convicts are overwhelmed by personal and financial troubles. Some have difficulty adjusting to relationships with spouses and families who have changed and learned to live with greater independence while the ex-convicts were away. Others may return to old

relationships that were built on the ex-convicts (or mutual) drug use. Still others, who are struggling to comply with substance abuse treatment and vocational requirements, may face hostility from family and friends who may not like the "new" person the ex-offender is being asked to (or has) become. The ex-offender can experience crushing disappointment at how difficult life is and how much adjustment is required. Having learned early in his life to deal with stress by drinking alcohol and using illicit substances, the ex-convicts may be tempted by the pull of the streets and old friends or relatives who still abuse substances.

- 5. Release From Prison Can Bring Culture Shock.** Ex-convicts leaving prison may find themselves in an unfamiliar world. Simple things such as ordering from a menu can seem alien and anxiety-provoking. For those who have served long terms, the shock can be intensified by the pace of technological change during their incarceration. Ex-convicts may be ashamed of their lack of familiarity with things other people take for granted.
- 6. Inferiority complex:** Another common challenge experienced by many participants was the feeling of inferiority. Participants noted that being in prison for a lengthy period contributed to stagnation in one's life. Participants added that, by the time many of them came out of prison, they had lost out on key progress

opportunities compared to their peers. This, they argued, leads to a lot of stress and regret, which are difficult to deal with. It contributed to feelings of inferiority and regret, which are a psychological burden necessitating professional help and support.

In the words of Shinkfield and Graffam (2009), presently, individuals live in a complex world where there is a rapid change and progress in people and society at large have become the order of the day. The participants' views stated above are therefore understandable. When one serves time in prison for a few years, one will definitely miss opportunities, given that prison entails stagnation. One is therefore bound to feel regret when one realises how one's own peers have progressed in life. This finding has implications for social work practice. It is important for social workers and other professionals working within the field of offender rehabilitation and reintegration to fully understand the potential challenges that ex-offenders face and would need support and counselling on. It is possible that if feelings of regret and inferiority are not addressed and issues at the psychosocial level not dealt with, this may actually lead to reoffending. Crime offers the potential for instant riches. As such, ex-offender may see resorting to crime as a potential panacea for making up lost ground. To this end, psychosocial services offered to offenders in preparing them for release should also focus on preparing offenders to accept and come to terms

with the issue of "lost ground". This would reduce the levels of stress and regret. And it would also help ex-offenders to cope better and adjust. Scholars such as Davis *et al.* (2012) and Small (2005) note that rapid changes that take place in the outside world while offenders are in prison often leads to their struggling to cope. Their low self-esteem and doubt that results if not addressed can hinder reintegration and result in recidivism.

7. Struggle with change of environment

According to Williams-Queen (2014), the Society is changing at a very rapid pace. Seiter and Kadela, (2003) also stated that for some ex-offenders "the world to which they return is drastically different from the one they left". Technology is an example of a rapid change that could overwhelm an individual that has been incarcerated ten or more years. Currently, many more offenders are being released compared to in the past. Some of the offenders are being released with no supervision requirements after release (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Many of the empirical researchers have stated that these individuals are likely leaving jail or prison with little social support. The communities that they return to are disorganized, their families are less supportive, and the releases have few community resources available to them (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Reintegration into this type of environment puts ex-offenders at risk for recidivism (Bellair & Kowalski, 2011). It is said that the more social support an individual has, the greater the likely

hood that a person will have a successful reintegration. There is a struggle in the adaptation of the sudden new environment in which they find themselves. The prison environment is characterized by routine and its own culture. As such, one gets used to the prison routines and ways of life, and after many years readjusting to normal life outside the confines of jail becomes a challenge. Based on these changes, it is obvious and imperative that ex-convicts need counselling to help them adjust to their new environment.

Furthermore, it is also common seeing many researchers agreeing that individuals in the correctional system are not being rehabilitated. The evidence that supports this theory is the high recidivism rate. "Overall, prisoners are serving significantly longer prison terms, and only a small percentage is receiving the benefit of extensive rehabilitation or pre-release programs" (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). The interventions that are being implemented are not great, "almost every state and the federal prison system have prerelease programs many are only a few hours of orientation by parole or mandatory release supervision officers". The newly released inmates have a lifetime of struggles that cannot be rehabilitated over the course of a few hours. Individuals reentering society after incarceration would greatly benefit from having individualized plans of action that address the ex-offenders' specific needs. The exit plans of action should be client centered and individualized to predict the best outcomes for the

individual reentering society, after incarceration.

The implications of distinguishing their lived experiences upon liberation from incarceration are emphasized on their roles as “re-accepted” members of the society. With this, it is important to understand the perceptions and views of ex-convicts about the attitude of their neighbours towards their status of newly acquired freedom. It can be seen though that the general attitude of ex-convicts’ neighbours toward them is hostile. According to Averill, Boswell, Lupin, Mather and Winata (2015), the society denigrates and ostracizes ex-convicts and with this perception, their level of moral weakens making the role of the counsellor inevitable in their lives. It is noticed that when an inmate is released, he is tagged to have completed his sentence and is considered again as a bona fide member of the society, however, the truth remains that ex-convicts suffered for their crimes even after their required sentences end and most of these sufferings are emotional or psychological in nature. The UK Essays (2015) notes that after leaving the physical incarceration, it is observed that ex-offenders entered another prison cells due to social stigma they experienced making them feel difficult to live for the second time. Further, Davis (2014) found the same results and underscored that on the outside, the stigma attached to the ex-convicts is one of the causes of their unemployment. Walmsley (2013) through the International Centre for Prison Studies stated that there are more than 10.2 million people that are held in penal institutions throughout the world. It was also found out that while undergoing transition

processes, former criminals have encountered challenges due to ineffective pre-released plan in correctional institutions as well as post-release interventions that pertain to their lives. In a related study conducted by Community Technical Aid, (2004), “there are several barriers that they confronted in their post-imprisonment period”. These include health related problems, homelessness, financial constraints, and ineffective prison rehabilitation programs, harassment for women prisoners among others. It can be really concluded that an ex-prisoners experiences are basically unpleasant and that the system needs a big improvement. Afouxenidis, and Cavouriaris (2003) conducted field study of ex-convicts reintegration into labor market and social life in three countries namely Greece, Germany, and France. Their findings showed that the problem ex-convicts face during reintegration are professional qualifications for employment purposes, lifestyle and routine socialization problems and adjustments to the society. One of the issues that became much clearer from this study is that society has to shift away from the problems from expanding prisons and prison populations and focus much more towards thinking about penal reforms and specific procedures that may assist prisoners’ reintegration. Williams-Queen (2014) also validated these findings. Educational qualifications among ex-convicts were found to be one major problem for their employment. These findings validated that finding a job is significant in ex-convicts “effective re-entry into the community. Moreover, Pager (2002) conducted a research identifying the barriers for ex-convicts”

employment. Employers seem to use the information as a screening mechanism, weeding out undesirable candidates at the very start of the hiring process. The results of the study provided evidence for the powerful effect of a criminal record as an employment barrier. A study conducted by Alos, Esteban, Jodar and Miguelez (2011) revealed that employability of ex-offenders disclosed that 43.6% of the ex-prisoners landed to any job after their release and their engagements to vocational trainings had favorable effects on their employability regardless of educational attainment or job skills at all.

The European Union sees social inclusion as ‘a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights”.

According to Mahaldar (2015), social inclusion is a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all. The multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision making processes. It is also defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are

disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Social inclusion may also be interpreted as the process by which societies combat poverty and social exclusion. Social inclusion aims to empower poor and marginalized people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities. It ensures that people have a voice in decisions which affect their lives and that they enjoy equal access to markets, services and political, social and physical spaces. The concept of social inclusion describes works related to promote equal opportunities and resources between people with and without disabilities. It also refers to the extent that individuals, families, and communities are able to fully participate in society and control their own destinies, taking into account a variety of factors related to economic resources, employment, health, education, housing, recreation, culture, and civic engagement. This concept describes bringing in’ disadvantaged groups to major social institutions for the materialization of citizenship rights, with the goal of improving both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society. Definitions of social inclusion commonly include concepts like respect, diversity, shared goals and meanings and a feeling of belonging to a community.

Finally, the concept of social inclusion entails the efforts that are exerted to close the gap between the different social segments in the society with respect to social and economic aspects. From this premise, it is apparent that in the Nigerian state, the need for social inclusion is inevitable. In Nigeria, there are persistent

issues of ethnic tensions, crime as well as hostilities. This unfortunate circumstance definitely leads to convictions as well as detentions. After incarceration, ex-convicts are left aloof the streets with the emotional mark of stigmatization, discrimination and disconsolate. This invisible mark if left unchecked certainly may leads them to even greater crime. In a situation where an ex-convict assumes that since he or she is seen or perceived as a criminal depending on the level of their offence and as such is discriminated even after incarceration, it may be totally possible that such a one fall back or relapse to the behaviour.

Recidivism or relapse is synonymous with the concept of falling back to the vomit. Henslin (2008) stated that it is the act of a person repeating an undesirable behavior after they have either experienced negative consequences of that behavior, or have been trained to extinguish that behavior. It is also used to refer to the percentage of former prisoners who are rearrested for a similar offense. Many studies have shown a correlation between prisoners attending rehabilitation programs while incarcerated and their likelihood of recidivism. Most have no significant results, although, some studies have shown a positive correlation. According to *Van der Linden (2015)*, the findings that have shown significant results are normally boot camp experiments that have aftercare programs for at least four months. There are studies that show exactly the opposite—that boot camp combined with aftercare with juveniles has a recidivism rate of 74%. *The Bureau of Data and Research, (1996)* also reported that the so-called "green prison programs" providing horticultural

therapy and green jobs post-release have shown positive effects on recidivism and rehabilitation as well and are increasing in popularity across the United States. To *Van der Linden (2015)*, when coupled with "green reentry jobs" these outcomes appear to have an even stronger positive effect on reducing recidivism rates (*Sbicca, 2016*).

In a study conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Correction in the year 2011, prisoners having drug related arrests were monitored after their release. Furthermore, the recidivism rates of former prisoners that entered the Massachusetts Department of Correction Correctional Recovery Academy program upon release would be compared with the recidivism rates of prisoners who did not enter the program. The Correctional Recovery Academy program is a six-month substance abuse treatment program. The study findings were that those who completed the program had a 46.9% recidivism rate after 3 years, while those who did not use the program had a 52.9% recidivism rate.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections did a similar study on criminals who are in prison to see if rehabilitation during incarceration correlates with recidivism and/or saved the state money. They used the Minnesota's Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) which consisted of three phases. The first was a six-month institutional phase followed by two aftercare phases, each lasting at least six months, for a total of about eighteen months. The first phase was the "boot camp" phase. Here inmates had daily schedules sixteen hours long where they

participated in activities and showed discipline. Some activities in phase one included physical training, manual labor, skills training, drug therapy, and transition planning. The second and third phases were called "community phases." In phase two the participants are on intensive supervised release (ISR). ISR includes being in contact with your supervisor on a daily basis, being a full-time employee, keeping curfew, passing random drug and alcohol tests, and doing community service while continuing to participate completely in the program. The final phase is phase three. During this phase one is still on ISR and has to remain in the community while maintaining a full-time job. They have to continue with community service and their participation in the program. Once phase three is complete participants have "graduated" CIP. They are then put on supervision until the end of their sentence. Inmates who drop out or fail to complete the program are sent back to prison to serve the rest of their sentence. Information was gathered through a quasi-experimental design. This compared the recidivism rates of the CIP participants with a control group. The findings of the study have shown that the CIP program did not significantly reduce the chances of recidivism. However, CIP did increase the amount of time before re-arrest. Moreover, CIP early release graduates lower the costs for the state by millions every year.

Stanz (2000) also studied "Predictors of Success and Recidivism in a Home Incarceration Program". The study was done in Jefferson County, Kentucky which discussed an alternative to jail time. The

alternative was "home incarceration" in which the defendant would complete his or her time at home instead of in jail. According to the study: "Results show that the majority of offenders do successfully complete the program, but that a majority are also re-arrested within 5 years of completion." In doing this, they added to the rate of recidivism. In doing a study on the results of this program, Stanz considered age, race, neighborhood, and several other aspects. Most of the defendants who fell under the recidivism category included those who were younger, those who were sentenced for multiple charges, those accruing fewer technical violations, males, and those of African-American descent. The study built a socio-demographic of the offenders who were returned to the correctional system within a year of release. There was no significant difference between black offenders and white offenders. The study concluded that race does not play an important role in juvenile recidivism. The findings ran counter to conventional beliefs on the subject, which may not have controlled for other variables.

McMillan (2008) also conducted a study on the recidivism rate of inmates receiving MMT (Methadone Maintenance Therapy). This therapy is intended to wean heroin users from the drug by administering small doses of methadone, thereby avoiding withdrawal symptoms. 589 inmates who took part in MMT programs between November 22, 2005 and October 31, 2006 were observed after their release. Among the male and female inmates, "there was no statistically significant effect of receiving methadone

in the jail or dosage on subsequent recidivism risks”.

Male prisoners are exposed and subject to sexual and physical violence in prisons. When these events occur, the victim usually suffers emotionally and/or physically. Studies suggest that this leads the inmate to accept these types of behaviors and value their lives and the lives of others less when they are released. These dehumanizing acts, combined with learned violent behavior, are implicated in higher recidivism rates. Bailey (2009) also reported that two studies were done in an attempt to provide a “national” recidivism rate for the US. One was done in 1983 which included 108,580 state prisoners from 11 different states. The other study was done in 1994 on 272,111 prisoners from 15 states. Both studies represent two-thirds of the overall prisoners released in their corresponding years.

From all these reviews, it is obviously that the rise in recidivism among ex-convicts may be a product of negligence of counselling in this important time in human lives. As Nwuodu (2005) noted, “the high level of bullying, drug use, disobedience and every other negative trend is as a result of negligence of early development stages in life.

In all these, could it be traced to the failure to provide counselling services for ex-convict?

The theoretical based of the present paper is the Client-centered theory. This counselling approach is non-directive counselling postulated by Carl Rogers in 1957. Rogers view human beings as

essentially good, cooperative, constructive, rational, forward looking, realistic and trust worthy when people are under their normal conditions. When they are not threatened, they react positively, make progress and are capable of making or solving their own problems. In fact, people are able to make their own constructive decisions if they are given the opportunity to view their concerns objectively in a relaxed setting, free from criticism and threat. In this approach, the counsellor is expected to have an in-depth knowledge of the individual and help to provide the needed appropriate condition which will enable them follow the right direction. Rogers stressed the need for an unconditional positive regard for the client. This is premised in the fact that each individual desire to be loved and respected no matter their condition of offences in life. In this approach, counsellors should try and demonstrate to the clients that they are with them. They should be composed, attentive, responsive and empathetic. The client centered therapy believes so much that the good side of the clients will emerge if given the opportunity. This theory restrains itself from prescribing solutions to clients but creates a conducive environment for the client to solve their problem.

In the light of these, the present study aims at counselling of the ex-convict as a means of social inclusion against recidivism.

Research Questions

1. What are the counselling needs (educational, vocational and personal-social needs) of ex-

- convicts as perceived by counselors in Rivers state?
2. What is the difference between the counseling needs of ex-convicts as perceived by male and female counselors in Rivers state?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female counselors on the counselling needs of ex-convict in Rivers state.

Methods

The researcher in this study used the descriptive survey design. Participants in the study include post graduate students majoring in counselling from the faculty of education, University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Simple random, snowball and non-proportionate sampling technique were used to draw 37 students from each of the two institution making it 74 participant from a total population of 232. The simple random sampling was used to draw two institutions from the three universities in the state. The names of the institutions were written and folded in a piece of paper. The researcher then draw two pieces from it which revealed the two institutions earlier stated. Also, snowball sampling technique was used to recruit the participants who were majorly colleagues of the researcher who have undergone some internship programme on practical

counselling. Finally, non-proportionate sampling was used to draw 37 students each from the two institutions. The instruments for the data collection was tagged "Counselling for Ex-convict Social Inclusion Questionnaire" (CESIQ). The instrument was designed in a 4-point Likert type scale of Strongly Agreed to Strongly Disagree. The instrument contains two parts (A & B). In section A, the instrument carries the instruction as well as the gender of the respondent. In section B, the items are two sub-sections. Sub-section 1 carries items on the counselling needs of the ex-convict divided into educational, vocational as well as personal and psychosocial needs. This sub-section carries 20 items in all. In sub-section two, the items that measure the counsellors perception of counselling as a tool of social inclusion of ex-convicts in Rivers state. While sub-section one contains 20 items as mentioned earlier, sub-section two contains 10 items making it a total of 30 items in all. Validity of the instruments was determined using experts validation process while Cronbach Alpha was used in determining a reliability index of 0.84. Administration of the instrument was done on face to face basis with the help of trained research assistants. Item by item analysis was used in analyzing data generated. Also, independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the counselling needs (educational, vocational and personal-social needs) of ex-convicts as perceived by counselors in Rivers state?

Table 4.1: Showing Mean Standard Deviation and Criterion Mean Analysis of Cosunselling Needs of ex-convicts as perceived by counselors in Rivers state?

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	s.d	Criterion \bar{x}	Remark
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS					
1.	Ex-convicts needs continuous schooling	1.12	0.32	2.5	Disagree
2.	Ex-offenders also need to be re-educated in societal values and morals	2.61	1.12		Agree
3.	The need to be taught literary communication skills	2.76	0.91		Agree
4.	Ex-convict do not have enough basic skills	2.23	1.32		Disagree
5.	Ex-convicts need more educational qualification to fit into the society.	2.21	0.72		Disagree
Total Grand Mean		2.18	0.88		Disagree
VOCATIONAL NEEDS					
6.	Ex-convict needs career counselling for now to fit into jobs.	2.56	1.24	2.5	Agree
7.	Many ex-convicts went into crime because of lack of job.	2.64	0.86		Agree
8.	Many ex-convicts don't really agree to work.	2.11	1.03		Disagree
9.	Ex-convict find it difficult to access new jobs due to their past records	2.88	1.30		Agree
10.	Ex-convicts need more government intervention on jobs.	2.61	0.77		Agree
Total Grand Mean		2.56	1.04		Agree
PERSONAL/PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS					
11.	Ex-convict lacks respects for elders	2.43	1.32	2.5	Disagree
12.	Ex-convicts have low moral	2.88	1.08		Agreed
13.	Ex-convicts fight more often	2.38	0.44		Disagree
14.	Most Ex-convicts suffer depression	3.77	0.23		Agree
15.	Some has low self-esteem	3.52	0.18		Agree
16.	Ex-convicts need to develop more social skills	2.67	1.12	2.5	Agree
17.	The public needs a change of perception of the ex-convicts	3.56	0.87		Agree
18.	Some ex-convicts don't know how to take care of themselves	2.43	1.43		Disagree
19.	Ex-convicts needs to be package properly	2.24	1.21		Disagree
20.	Ex-convicts need to work on building new network of friends	3.12	0.87		Agree
Total Grand Mean		2.90	1.08		Agree

From the analysis in table 4.1 above, it was agreed that ex-convicts need re-education in societal values as well as

literary skills for communication. On the whole, the total grand means was 2.18 which was far below the criterion means of

2.5. Hence, the entire research question was not agreed upon meaning that counselling needs of the ex-convict does not include educational needs.

For vocational needs, it was agreed that ex-convict went into crime as a result of unavailability of jobs. They also need career counselling as they find it difficult to locate new jobs. They also need more government interventions in provision of jobs. In all, a total grand mean of 2.56 was

also realized indicating that the needs of ex-convicts include vocational needs.

In terms of personal and psychosocial needs, it was discovered that ex-convicts have low morale, are depressed, have low self-esteem, lack social skills, have bad public view as well as lack network of friends. In all a total grand mean of 2.90 was realized indicating that ex-convicts needs personal and psychosocial help from the counselors.

Research Question two: What is the difference between the counseling needs of ex-convicts as perceived by male and female counselors in Rivers state?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female counselors on the counselling needs of ex-convict in Rivers state.

Table 4.2: t-test analysis of the difference in perception of male and female counselors on counselling needs of ex-convict in Rivers state.

Gender	N	Mean	Std	Df	t-crit	α	t-cal	Sig.	Result
Male	35	34.97	4.94	72	1.960	0.05	0.20	0.84	Insignificant
Female	39	35.18	3.91						Retain Ho

From the analysis in table 4.2, male respondents were 35 while females were 39. Their mean and standard deviation were 34.97, 4.94 and 35.18, 3.91 respectively. From these mean values, it is seen that female counselors had more perception of counselling as an anti-recidivism towards social inclusion than their male counterparts. Calculated t was 0.20 while the sig. value was 0.84. hence, since the sig. value ($p=0.84>0.05$) is greater than the alpha level of 0.05 at 72 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis was retained meaning that actually There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female counselors

on the counselling needs of ex-convict in Rivers state.

Discussions

From the findings of research question one, it is seen that the counselling needs of the ex-convict is not educational in nature. This means that ex-convicts do not need much education after their release from the prison or incarceration. The reason from this findings could be that ex-offenders may seem themselves as wasting enough time in custody and may not really want to engage in another round or routine training that may linger their progress or “catching-up” in the society. This finding could also come about because some of the offenders may have passed through adequate training

before being incarcerated. On the contrary, it could be that those that are remanded in prison custody are those with little formal education who may have resolved not to proceed with the formal education system. This findings is not surprising to the researcher, this is because majority of prison inmates are those with little knowledge of formal education who may not also know the implications of their actions. This finding is however against that reported by the Massachusetts Department of Correction (2011) which reported that those who completed the program (formally arranged educational programme) had a 46.9% recidivism rate after 3 years, while those who did not use the program had a 52.9% recidivism rate. This indicated that ex-convict need a type of formal programme to keep in check against relapse.

It is also found that majority of the ex-convicts in the first place may have got into crime due to lack of jobs. Hence, the study revealed that they are in need of career counselling. they as well need help in order to acquire new jobs of which they need government intervention in this area mostly. On the whole, it was agreed that ex-cons needs counselling on areas of vocation. This means that the ex-convict as they are out from incarceration find it difficult to get a new job or find it hard to be offered employment. The reason for this may not be far-fetched. Tis could be as a result of the labeling in which the crime has put on them and also the belief by the public that they may not change. Furthermore, it could be hard for them because every new place of work may always need a letter of recommendation

from their previous employers which in this case is not palatable in helping them get a new job. The finding here is not also surprising to the researcher and is in line with that reported by Williams-Queen (2014) who identified lack of jobs as a major problem faced by ex-convicts after incarceration.

It was also discovered that ex-convicts needs counselling on their personal, psychological and social life. This means that as an ex-con, there are a lot of factors that may influence their personal life. The experiences they had while in prison which mostly are negative may have played down on their personal development. Also, incarceration also has a way of preying on ones' psychology. Hence, they are as well in need of psychological as well as emotional help. Finally, they may have also been negatively affected in their social life to people. They may have loosed the social skills they once had. On the contrary, even if they had not, the label attached to them as ex-convicts may have helped in scaring friends and others away from them thereby leaving them bereft socially. This finding is also not surprising to the researchers because findings of Stanz (2000) reported *similarly to the present one*.

From findings two, it is revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female counselors on counselling needs of for social inclusion of the ex-convict in Rivers state. Thus findings means that having establish counselling as an indispensable tool in helping ex-convicts towards social inclusion, there is then no difference in the

way male and female counselors perceive this. It also signifies that the way and manner male counselors see it as helping ex-convict is the same way female counselors seeing it. The finding is not surprise because the power role of counselling in social inclusion of individuals in the society is void of gender sentiments as well as any other thing. Hence, the finding is expected.

Conclusion

Counselling is an indispensable tool in combating behaviour problems of individuals. Incarceration is also a major happening in the life of an individual that may determines or shapes their life pattern of such individual negatively if not properly manage especially in Nigeria. After incarceration, the life of an ex-convict is unarguably difficult due to the social stigma the society place on the facility than the crime itself. Social inclusion entails the deliberate attempt to re-integrate social deviant who might have serve punishment for their offences back into the society. One of such effective ways is through counselling. One of the major problem of ex-convict are more of vocational and inter-personal issues and it is only through counseling that these ex-convicts can be fully integrated into the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. The government should set up a rehabilitation and monitoring mechanism that will take care of the needs of the ex-convicts after incarceration.
2. Qualified counselors should be deployed to prison facilities in the country to take care of some of these personal, social as well as psychological needof the inmates up till when they leave the prison.
3. Provision of skills should be made to engage these ex-convict after incarceration to help them to be productive economically and also avoid the stress of looking for jobs that may not be available for them.

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