

HUMAN RIGHT ABUSES IN JALINGO CUSTODIAL CENTRE, NIGERIA

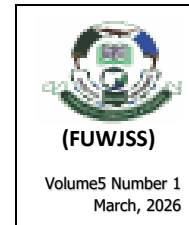
Dankano Chonwa Danasabe

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Social Sciences, Taraba State University

Jalingo, Nigeria

Email: chonwadankano@gmail.com



Abstract

Custodial Centres have been neglected more than any other criminal justice agency in Nigeria, it is disheartening that the inmates in the Nigerian custodial centres are often subjected to in-human and degrading treatments. This study focused on human rights abuses in Jalingo Custodial Centre. The paper ascertained the impact of inmate's torture and also the impact of inadequate vocational training programme in Jalingo custodial centre. The study was anchored on rehabilitation theory, and adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. A sample size of 242 respondents were generated from the total population of 606 through Taro Yamane statistical formula, and 4 key informants were selected for key informant interview. Responses from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed while outlining the key point presented by the key informant. The study's findings revealed that, the rights of the inmates are being abused through poor accommodation and overcrowding of the inmates in the custodial centres, inadequate medical facilities, personnel and poor aftercare service, inadequate vocational training and improper feeding, and constant torture with forced labour. The study recommended provision of adequate mental care and treatment for inmates who have experienced torture, implementation of rehabilitation programme, adequate accommodation and decongestion of Jalingo custodial centre.

Keywords: Human Rights, Human Rights Abuse, Inmates, Rehabilitation

Introduction

Every inmate has the fundamental right to be treated properly and without cruelty, especially at the hands of the government. On the contrary, Human rights abuse in detention facilities is a widespread occurrence, and it is a major issue in the administration of detention facilities all over the world. Globally, one of the main issues with detention centre management is overcrowding. At least one correctional facility in Ukraine had to force its inmates to sleep in shifts in 2012 due to overcrowding (Naik 2019). People in Eritrea were detained in impromptu settings, including as packed basements devoid of ventilation or hygienic

conditions or UN-ventilated shipping containers, due to extreme congestion in normal detention centres. Also, the penal system in Sri Lanka is thought to regularly house roughly three times its capacity, which is thought to have had a role in the violent altercation that occurred in November of 2012. Conditions in Chad's detention centres are frequently characterised by Amnesty International (2000) as "so deplorable that they amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment." Regional prison facilities also gave their inmates very few meals and had a very tight budget for food. Correctional guards were not paid on a regular basis, and occasionally they "released" prisoners in exchange for payment.

In many countries, violations of prisoners' rights in detention facilities are a sign of more serious problems including overburdened and ineffective legal systems, incompetent and dishonest law enforcement personnel, or inadequate staffing in detention facilities. The military or the local national police force oversees a large number of detention centres throughout Central America; these agencies typically lack the necessary operational and managerial experience. Because of this, certain correctional systems lack qualified leadership, lack standard operating procedures or are unable to apply them, and frequently show little to no dedication to staff development and treatment. In Serbia, almost 11,000 prisoners were housed in a system intended to house 6,500, and numerous institutions suffered from inadequate cleanliness. There have been complaints of inmates being physically abused by police officers and detention centre staff in certain places (Burchett 2023). Apart from the problem of overcrowding in cells, custodial centre monitoring bodies consistently identify other pressing issues in many Member States, albeit to varying degrees: poor hygiene and sanitary conditions, fewer opportunities for time spent outside of cells, inadequate access to healthcare, and lack of protection from violence among inmates (Burchett, 2023). Additionally, healthcare services are frequently of poor quality and are administered by authorities other than those in charge of the general public.

In Nigeria inmate's rights abuse in the custodial centres is a major problem that affects a substantial number of the custodial centres, Governments after governments have consistently and persistently failed to observe and respect human rights. Hence, human rights abuse in the custodial centres today in Nigeria manifest in many forms: torture, overcrowding, indecent accommodation, poor feeding, and poor medical attention, inadequate vocational training and lack of aftercare service among others. Most writers have described the correctional service system as being in the state of malfunction. They added that over the years Nigerian custodial centres have become a house of horror, that inmates die

daily due to poor sanitary conditions amongst other problems. Emeka (2011), argued that, the custodial centres is facing a lot of problems ranging from lack of medical facilities, poor sanitary facilities and bedding, which is serving as threat to physical and mental well-being of the inmates. This study looked at inmate rights abuses in custodial center in Jalingo, Nigeria.

Nature of Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria Correctional Centres

Chukwudi (2012), correctional facility serves as a breeding ground for criminal socialization and a school of crime. Brown (2002), opine that the Nigerian penal system lacks the funding necessary to design and implement cutting-edge initiatives for both male and female prisoners, including formal education and vocational training, even the limited institutions that are still in place, such industrial or agricultural plants, trade, and vocational training, are so antiquated or inoperable that they are unable to inspire, reform, organise, and provide released prisoners the tools they need to leave law-abiding lives. It is reasonable to argue that whether an inmate will eventually turn to reclusive behavior or return to crime after release depends on the type and implementation of Pre- and Post-release/follow-up programmes in Nigeria, if any, both inside and outside the correctional service system. When formerly incarcerated individuals are not able to find lucrative employment in society due to a lack of appropriate occupational training, academic credentials, or skill development certificates, it is equivalent to neither rehabilitation nor reformation. This development has significant ramifications for recidivism, or future reoffending. Social stigmatization in the mainstream society, precarious employment and low wages, inadequate programmes for education and skill acquisition in correctional services, post-release deviant neighbourhoods, a lack of post-release job training and educational opportunities, and post-release job deviance are the main causes of recidivism in Nigerian society (Chukwudi 2012). It is extremely dangerous to release demoralized prisoners who are economically, psychologically, physically, and socially without the necessary follow-up programmes and basic tools (like vocational training, credentials, etc.) to help them become self-sufficient or find fulfilling jobs in the public or private sectors. These individuals have a very high likelihood of returning into crime and criminality.

According to Skeem and Peterson (2010), low participation in pro-social activities like school and work is a risk factor for criminal recidivism. It is therefore not surprising that Chukwumerije (2012) stated that while recidivism is a key overall performance indicator for the criminal justice system, recidivism studies are a common technique to

measure the success of various criminal justice programmes and initiatives.

Another strong predictor of recidivism is peer pressure or influence. Despite the fact that younger people in a group environment seem to be under more pressure than their older peers or those who are thought to be intelligent and astute, there is a clear learning gradient and a mutually beneficial relationship between these social actors. According to Tenibiaje (2013), the key to group influence is direct behavioural learning through imitation and modelling. Certain crimes are done in groups, especially involving young people. The impact of peer groups and the pressure they may put on young people to experiment and show other signs of their increasing independence are factors that have been shown to have an impact on recidivism. The relationship that exists in social interaction patterns with these groupings is what gives rise to the peer generation effects. Furthermore, it has been suggested by crime researchers such as Farrington (2010) that a higher risk of offending and reoffending is associated with spending a lot of time with family or friends who commit crimes.

Theoretical Framework

The rehabilitation hypothesis serves as the study's theoretical foundation. Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a gradual acceptance of the idea that more was needed in response to the early schools of penology. In the observation of Ugwuoke (2000), the tenets of hypothesis view punishment from various angles and believe that the goal of the criminal justice system should be treatment and correction. Rehabilitation necessitates treating the offender with humanity, respect, and dignity as well as with love, kindness, and compassion rather than with cruelty, disdain, and hatred. Hampton cited in Ugwuoke (2000), holds that the only way to justify punishment is if it helps the one receiving it. She also believes that we should never cause harm to others and that we should never infringe upon someone's right to autonomy. With these convictions, punishment is obviously problematic for her.

Rehabilitating a criminal into a useful member of society who makes positive contributions to both their own and society's development is predicated on the ideas that people are not born criminals. According to Dambazau (2007), the rehabilitation theory teaches us that, in order to properly deal with an offender, we must regard him as an individual with unique needs and problems that must be identified. Examining rehabilitation as a defence of punishment, Dambazau (2007) pointed out that the idea of rehabilitation can be used to deter crime by altering the offender's personality. According to this theory, punishment looks at the

offender's receptivity to treatment rather than his level of danger. He did point out, though, that the seriousness of the offence may not always indicate the extent or length of the rehabilitation process. Furthermore, Siegel (2005) confirmed that rehabilitation is the idea that criminals can be transformed into law-abiding, productive members of society if they receive the right support and care. The rehabilitation school, which is influenced by positivist criminology, contends that criminals themselves are complicit in other people's crimes, particularly when it comes to stigma and unemployment.

This suggests that crime is a problem that affects both individuals and society as a whole. In addition, criminals themselves are victims of racism, poverty, and social injustice; they act in reaction to society's betrayal; additionally, their upbringing in poverty and distress may have left them with psychological issues and personality disorders that contribute to their propensity for crime. In the same vein. Ugwuoke (2000) states that rehabilitation necessitates treating the offender with humanity, respect and dignity, and with love, kindness, and compassion rather than with brutality, contempt, and animosity. Our idea, which aims to provide a rationale or explanation for the treatment of prisoners in detention facilities by "changing the attitude and behaviour of criminals so that they would be able to choose lawful means, in satisfying their needs," really encapsulated the main focus of our study. When inmates are educated, well treated and given vocational training in the custodial it will help them to be productive thereby turning a new live. And after their release from the custodial center, they will become better citizen in the society. However, the theory has faced the following criticism, the rehabilitation principles tend to obscure the true circumstances and goings-on within prisons. Instead of having a therapeutic quality, the rehabilitative ideal is more likely to be incarcerative, with the possibility of holding inmate indefinitely until he has fully recovered. It has resulted in harsher punishments, particularly in the area of juvenile justice. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that juveniles who committed offences that are typically disregarded when punishment is stressed were subjected to indefinite detention (Dambazau, 2007).

Rehabilitative views have additional issues. One may question, for example, whether punishment can be rehabilitative, given that it is impossible to gauge the length of time a criminal must spend in a detention facility in order to undergo full rehabilitation. Because of the fact that criminals may pretend to have been reformed in order to escape custodial center and go back to their old ways, knowing that the length of their sentence relies on how they behave while incarcerated. Ugwuoke (2000), inmates are detained in custodial centre until they are declared to have

undergone reform in accordance with the principles of rehabilitation. This logic gave rise to the indeterminate punishment, which forces the offender to act in a way that meets the demands of the law enforcement.

Research Methodology

The study adopted cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. It used both quantitative and qualitative method of data collection which include the use of questionnaire and interview schedule. The sample size of 242 respondents was selected from the total population of 606 using the Taro Yamane formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 242 who were randomly selected in the custodial center jalingo. The study also employ key informant interview (KII) to compliment the questionnaire and to enable the researcher get first hand information on the reality of human right abuse in jalingo custodial centre Jalingo. Responses from the questionnaire were computed in statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage were used to analyze the data. Similarly, thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected via key informant interviews.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Agreement on what constitutes Human rights abuse in Jalingo Custodial Centre, Taraba State

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	X	STD
Poor accommodation and overcrowding	77	106	10	21	17	4.15	.856
Inadequate medical facilities, personnel and poor aftercare	132	79	1	16	3	4.39	.825
Inadequate vocational training and improper feeding.	121	96	1	6	7	4.38	.629
Torture and forced labour.	111	103	5	8	4	4.34	.839

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The study revealed that the rights of the inmates are been abused through poor accommodation and overcrowding of the inmates in custodial center, inadequate medical facilities and personnel and poor aftercare service, inadequate vocational training and improper feeding, and constant torture with forced labour, with the mean value from 4.15 to 4.39 which were above the cutoff point of 2.50. This implied that the statements were all accepted. The findings in Table above showed that all the pointers of human rights abuse in Jalingo custodial center were accepted with the mean scores of above the cutoff point of 3.50 and the standard deviation ranged from 0.629 and 0.856. This showed that, the standard deviation were close to one (1) which shows the closeness of the variables to each other. Rehabilitation is the idea that criminals can be transformed into law-abiding, productive members of society if they receive the right support and care, treating the offender with humanity, respect, and dignity as well as with love, kindness, and compassion rather than with cruelty, disdain, and hatred will make the inmates to become productive after their release from the custodial centres.

Table 2: Respondents ratings of the impacts of Inmates torture in Jalingo Custodial Centre

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	X	STD
Inmate's torture can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).	89	119	4	10	9	4.16	.862
Inmate's torture can cause physical and psychological damage that makes it difficult for former inmates to reintegrate into society and find work.	131	72	2	19	7	4.30	.775
Inmate's torture can lead to the commitment of crime.	128	79	1	15	8	4.32	.842
Inmate's torture can cause less interest on vocational training.	77	142	2	5	5	4.23	.637
Inmate's torture can make them have negative perception on the custodial center which is made to rehabilitate the inmates.	101	106	6	8	10	4.21	.820
Inmates' torture can lead to feelings of anger and aggression.	116	99	1	6	9	4.33	.873
Inmates' torture can cause difficulty in controlling emotions.	127	82	-	19	3	4.35	.761
Inmates' torture can lead to further criminal activity.	64	133	6	24	4	3.99	.686

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The study revealed that the torturing of inmates can lead to post-traumatic stress, psychological damage, commitment of crime, less interest on vocational training, negative perception about custodial centre, feeling of anger and aggression, difficulty of emotion control which may result to further criminal activities. All these have the mean values from 3.99 to 4.35; this implied that the statements were all accepted. Based on the findings in Table above, it showed that all the indicators of promotion and job performance were accepted with the mean scores of above the cut off point of 2.50 and the standard deviation ranged from 0.637 and 0.873. This indicated that, the standard deviation were close to one (1) to show how close the variables were.

A 42 year old Correctional Officer through an interview session opined that:

As a matter of fact, inmate's torture can make them have bad perception on the custodial center which is made to rehabilitate the inmates. In addition, it will be difficult for inmates to control their emotions. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

Another respondents who is 39 year old stated that:

All I have to say is that, inmate's torture can cause less interest on vocational training. This may affect their ego and may likely push them to commit suicide in order to rest from the torturing. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

Another Key respondent who is 51 year old had this to say:

My humble opinion in this aspect is that, inmates' torture can cause more feelings of anger and aggression that may force some of the inmates to commit further offense. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

A 37 year old Correctional Officer had this to say:

Serious torturing of inmates can result to further criminal activity by the inmates. Next to that, torturing can result to post-traumatic stress disorder among other negative situations. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

According rehabilitation theory, in order to properly deal with an offender, we must regard him as an individual with unique needs and problems that must be identified. And that criminals can only be transformed or rehabilitated if well taken care of. Subjecting criminals or inmates to hard punishment can only make them more hardened criminals and thereby becoming a problem to the society after their release from the custodial centre.

Table 3 Respondents ratings of the impacts of abuse of inmates vocational training in Jalingo Custodial Centre

Statements	SA	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	SD	X	STD
Inadequate vocational training can lead to the reoffending of the inmates by not giving them a way to support themselves financially.	111	98	1	11	10	4.25	.694
Inadequate vocational training can cause inmates not to feel connected to their communities and it will also	136	50	5	34	6	4.19	.887

spur them to engage into more in criminal activities that would lead to recidivism.

Inadequate vocational training of inmates can lead to lack of job skills among former inmates, which can make it difficult for them to find employment after release and that would lead to recidivism.	131	88	-	2	10	4.42	.982
It can contribute to a sense of hopelessness and frustration, which can increase the risk of reoffending.	73	129	5	17	3	4.04	.636
Inadequate vocational training can also lead to a lack of motivation among former inmates, as they may not see any realistic opportunities for improving their circumstances.	144	67	4	9	7	4.44	.694
You are responsible for the inadequate vocational training programmes due to your lack of interest.	117	92	-	20	2	4.31	.806

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The study revealed that there were inadequate vocational training on recidivism in Jalingo custodial center. It further revealed that inadequate vocational training of the inmates can lead to reoffending by not giving them the way to support themselves financially, inadequate vocational training may cause the inmates not to be connected to their communities, and inadequate vocational training can lead to lack of job interest, sense of hopelessness and frustration amongst others. All these statements were having the mean value from 4.04 to 4.44 above the cutoff point of 2.50. This implied that the statements were all accepted. Based on the findings in Table above, it showed that all the health insurance and job performance were accepted with the mean scores of above the cutoff point of 2.50 and the standard deviation ranged from 0.636 and 0.982. This indicated that, the standard deviation were close to one (1) which show how close the variables were.

A 42 year old Correctional Officer had this to say:

As a matter of fact, inmates who usually participate in vocational training are seen to do well and will do better when reintegrated into the society than those who are reluctant over any available vocational training. In addition, there are shortage of different vocational facilities, which we believe that more will be provided by government with time, and those

that need to be fixed will also be done appropriately in order to encourage more participation. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

Another respondents who is 39 year old stated that:

To the best of my knowledge, adequate vocational training will improve the situations of the inmates but inadequate vocational training of inmates can lead to deficiency of job skills among the inmates. This may likely affect their employment life when they are released. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

Another Key respondent who is 51 year old had this to say:

Based on my experiences in this job, when there are adequate vocational training facilities, the rate of recidivism will be reduced drastically, while inadequate vocational training may lead to a lack of motivation among former inmates because they may not see any realistic opportunities for improving their conditions (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

A 37 year old Correctional Officer opined that:

To me all I have to say is that, the government should as a matter of urgency make other skills development training materials available to help the inmates in their situations because inadequate vocational training may lead to the reoffending of the inmates. (Jalingo Custodial Centre, KII-3TH January 2026).

When inmates are trained in vocational training, after their release they will become self sufficient and also become useful to themselves because rehabilitation theory is of the view that, criminals can only be transformed or rehabilitated if well taken care of.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to determine human rights abuse in Jalingo custodial center, Nigeria. The findings of the study have shown that, the rights of the inmates are been abused through poor accommodation and overcrowding of the inmates in the custodial centres, inadequate medical facilities, personnel and poor aftercare service, inadequate vocational training and improper feeding, and constant torture with forced labour. Based on findings of the study, the following are the recommendations: There should be clear policies and procedures that prohibit abuse of inmates. In addition, there should also be a mechanism for reporting and investigating allegations of abuse, and by ensuring that inmates have access to legal representation with other resources. There should be provision of adequate mental care and treatment for inmates who have experience torture. In addition to implementation of rehabilitation

programmes that focus on reducing recidivism. There should be increase of the availability of vocational training programmes in custodial centers. There should be financial and material support by government and society to the inmates after their release from the custodial center in order to be self-sufficient after release. There should be adequate vocational training programme, provision of aftercare services for the inmates after releases and strong policy and procedure should be promulgated to prevent human rights abuse in the custodial center.

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