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Original Research Article

## **Educational Support as Human Capital Development Strategy for Inmates in the Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** This study assessed the place of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) in promoting human capital development through educational support programmes for inmates in maximum security correctional centers in Rivers State. The study is premised on the recognition that education is a major tool for rehabilitation, reintegration, and reduction of recidivism among inmates. Despite the reform-oriented mandate of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortage of qualified instructors, and overcrowding continue to hinder the effective implementation of educational programmes within correctional facilities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, with a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from a population of 2,371 inmates and correctional personnel. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis. The findings revealed that educational support programmes, including literacy education, and access to tertiary education through institutions such as the National Open University of Nigeria, have a positive and statistically significant relationship with the Nigerian Correctional Service's rehabilitative objectives. The study concludes that although educational support is a vital component of inmate rehabilitation in Rivers State, its full potential has not been realized due to persistent systemic challenges. It therefore recommends increased funding, improved learning infrastructures, recruitment of qualified educators, curriculum modernization, and strengthened policy implementation with enhanced collaboration with external educational institutions and stakeholders necessary to ensure sustainable human capital development and successful reintegration of inmates into society.

**Keywords:** Educational Support, Inmates, Maximum Security Custodial Center, Human Capital Development.

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## Introduction

The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), formerly known as the Nigerian Prisons Service, is a major institution within Nigeria's criminal justice system in charge of the custody, rehabilitation, and reintegration of offenders, all of which come as government policy (Eyo, 2023). established under the Nigerian Correctional Service Act of 2019, the Service indicates a change from a purely punitive prison system to a more reform-oriented correctional service. (Nseobot, et al., 2019). This transformation emphasizes not only the secure detention of inmates but also their personal development through structured rehabilitation programmes, including education, vocational training, and psychological support.

Education performs a central role in the correctional objectives of the NCS. As observed by Eyo et al. (2026), a significant proportion of inmates enter correctional facilities with limited formal education and employable skills. The Service has integrated various educational support systems aimed at reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration into society. These supports include adult literacy programmes, basic and secondary education, as well as opportunities for tertiary education through partnerships with institutions such as the National Open University of Nigeria. Through these initiatives, inmates are able to acquire foundational knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and improve their chances of securing lawful employment upon release (Agunyai et al., 2025).

Considering formal education, the Nigerian Correctional Service provides vocational and technical training in areas such as carpentry, tailoring, agriculture, and information technology. These programmes are designed to equip inmates with practical skills that can foster self-reliance and entrepreneurship. Educational supports are enhanced by collaborations with non-governmental organizations, religious bodies, and international agencies, which provide learning materials, training personnel, and infrastructural support.

The emphasis on education within the Nigerian Correctional Service underscores a broader commitment to human capital development, aligning with global best practices that view correctional institutions not merely as places of confinement but as centers for transformation and social reintegration (Mboho and Ataire, 2018).

To this, correctional facilities are categorized based on security levels, with maximum security correctional centers established to house high-risk inmates, including those convicted of serious crimes or awaiting trial for capital offenses. In Rivers State, the maximum security correctional center such as the Port Harcourt Maximum Security Custodial Centre, performs certain custodial services in managing such inmates under strict surveillance while simultaneously providing opportunities for rehabilitation. Despite the highly controlled environment, the Nigerian Correctional Service has increasingly

integrated educational support programmes into these facilities as part of its broader correctional mandate (Popoola et al., 2023).

Educational support for inmates in maximum security facilities in Rivers State involve different aspect of formal and informal learning initiatives. These include adult literacy programmes aimed at addressing basic educational deficiencies, as well as secondary education opportunities that enable inmates to sit for national examinations. Also, access to tertiary education has been expanded through collaborations with institutions such as the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), allowing inmates to pursue diploma, degree and Postgraduate programmes through distance learning. These initiatives are designed to equip inmates with intellectual skills, improve their cognitive development, and foster positive behavioral change (Obioha, 2011).

Again, educational interventions are regularly supported by partnerships with non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, and community stakeholders who provide instructional materials, funding, and technical expertise, as the implementation of educational programmes in maximum security facilities in Rivers State faces several challenges. These includes, limited infrastructure, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified educators, and security constraints that restrict the movement and interaction of inmates. Despite these limitations, the emphasis on education within the Nigerian Correctional Service underscores its commitment to transforming correctional centers into institutions of reform rather than mere detention (Obioha, 2011).

### **Statement of the problem**

In the face of the reform-oriented mandate of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), which emphasizes rehabilitation and reintegration through education and skill acquisition, the effective implementation of educational support programmes for inmates particularly in maximum security correctional centers remain a significant challenge. In Rivers State, where maximum security facilities such as the Port Harcourt Maximum Security Custodial Centre are located, inmates are expected not only to serve custodial sentences but also to undergo transformative educational experiences that can prepare them for productive reintegration into society. Despite these efforts, challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified instructors, and limited educational infrastructure continue to hinder the effective delivery of educational programmes within correctional facilities.

One of the core problems is the inadequate provision of educational infrastructure and learning resources within maximum security facilities. Classrooms, libraries, and instructional materials are often insufficient or poorly maintained, thereby limiting inmates' access to quality education. Also, the shortage of qualified teaching personnel and facilitators additionally, undermines the effectiveness of educational programmes, especially in specialized areas such as vocational and technical training.

Another major problem is the limited access to advanced educational opportunities, particularly tertiary education, despite partnerships with institutions like the National Open

University of Nigeria (NOUN). Challenges such as inadequate awareness, lack of funding, and insufficient technological infrastructure hinder inmates from enrolling in and completing such programmes, of which these challenges additionally leads to weak policy implementation, inconsistent funding, and limited monitoring and evaluation of educational initiatives within correctional centers. As a result, the intended goal of using education as a tool for rehabilitation and reduction of recidivism is not fully realized.

It is under these challenges, that the researcher consider this research a paramount for major findings

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was Human Capital Development and educational support for inmates in the Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria, while the specific objective was:

1. To assess relationship between Human Capital Development and educational support for inmates in the Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

The following research question was raised to guide this research work;

1. What is the relationship between Human Capital Development and educational support for inmates in the Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Human Capital Development and educational support for inmates in the Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria

### **The Nigerian Correctional Service**

The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), being the governmental body responsible for the custody, reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of inmates in Nigeria experience the renaming and restructuring of the agency came into effect with the signing of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act in August 2019 by President Muhammadu Buhari, reflecting a shift in idea from mere imprisonment to correction and rehabilitation. This transformation aims to align Nigeria's correctional system with international best practices that emphasize human rights, behavioral reform, and social reintegration of offenders (Dolapo & Adesola, 2025).

The Nigerian Correctional Service operates under the Federal Ministry of Interior and is headed by the Controller-General of Corrections. It administers both custodial and non-custodial measures as stipulated in the 2019 Act. The custodial component involves the physical confinement of convicted individuals and those awaiting trial, while the non-custodial component includes alternatives such as community service, probation,

parole, restorative justice, and other correctional measures that do not require imprisonment (Osagie & Omorovbiy, 2022). These non-custodial measures are particularly significant in addressing issues of overcrowding in Nigerian prisons, which has been a longstanding concern. One of the core mandates of the NCS is the reformation of inmates through structured programmes such as vocational training, formal and informal education, moral and religious instruction, and psychosocial therapy. Inmates are given opportunities to acquire skills in carpentry, tailoring, farming, welding, and other trades, with the aim of preparing them for reintegration into society as productive citizens (Ewelum, et al., 2015).

Educational initiatives, including collaborations with institutions like the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), allow inmates to pursue academic qualifications even while incarcerated but in the process of bringing about this human capital development exercises certain many challenges impedes the performances of these rehabilitative function some of which includes, overcrowding which remains a critical issue, exacerbated by a high number of inmates awaiting trial, who constitute more than 60% of the prison population in some states. This delays justice and places immense pressure on available infrastructure and personnel (Nigerian Correctional Service Act. s-10, c-f, 2019).

Poor funding, inadequate medical facilities, staff shortages, and poor working conditions for correctional officers also hinder the effectiveness of the service. Furthermore, the lack of effective post-release support and social reintegration programs often results in high recidivism rates among ex-inmates. However, the NCS continues to strive for improvement through policy reforms, infrastructural development, and partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These partnerships are crucial in supplementing government efforts and in advocating for a more humane and efficient correctional system. Efforts are also ongoing to digitalize prison records, improve data management, and enhance security infrastructure to prevent jailbreaks, which have occurred intermittently in various facilities (Nigerian Correctional Service Act, s.45, 2019).

### **Nigerian Correctional Service and Educational Support of Inmates**

As observed and stated by Henry & William (2021), the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS), formerly known as the Nigerian Prisons Service, is a federal agency under the Ministry of Interior, tasked with the responsibility of managing the custody, rehabilitation, and reformation of inmates across the country. One of its most significant mandates, particularly since the enactment of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act of 2019, is the rehabilitation of inmates through various programmes, with education being a critical pillar of this reformative effort. Educational support within the Nigerian Correctional Service is increasingly recognized not only as a tool for rehabilitation but also as a fundamental human right that must be preserved even within the prison environment. Over the years, the NCS has made notable strides in providing formal and informal educational opportunities to inmates (Otodo, 2017). These include adult literacy classes, secondary education, vocational and technical training, and in some cases, access to tertiary education through distance learning programmes in partnership with institutions such as the

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Such initiatives are designed to empower inmates with skills and knowledge that can aid their reintegration into society, reduce recidivism, and improve their chances of securing employment upon release (Obioha, 2011).

Educational programmes which is a continuous education, including high school equivalency diplomas, college courses, and vocational skills training. This helps develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and life skills. Life skills development which are considered as Courses focusing on topics like budgeting, conflict resolution, anger management, substance abuse recovery, and healthy relationships (Helen et al., 2023). This fosters personal growth and reduces the risk of recidivism. Mentorship programmes, in this type of human capital training involves pairing inmates with successful individuals who can provide guidance and support, promoting positive role models and motivation. Mental health and wellness programmes which involves addressing the mental health challenges often prevalent in prison populations and providing support for managing stress and trauma, crucial for long-term success. Entrepreneurial training which is the developing of business skills and fostering the ability to start and manage a business, which can provide independence and economic opportunities upon release and finally, access to technology and digital literacy illustrating the means of equipping inmates with essential digital skills for modern job markets (Eyo, et al., 2024).

The integration of educational support within correctional facilities also addresses the broader societal issues of illiteracy, unemployment, and social inequality, which are often linked to criminal behavior. Through literacy programs, inmates who may have never attended formal schooling are given a chance to learn to read and write, thereby boosting their self-esteem and opening up new pathways for personal development. Vocational training, such as tailoring, carpentry, and computer literacy, is another critical component, providing practical skills that are immediately useful both within the prison environment and after release (Oduntan, 2023). Despite these efforts, the implementation of educational programmes in Nigerian correctional facilities faces several challenges. These include inadequate funding, overcrowded prison conditions, lack of trained teaching staff, and insufficient learning materials and infrastructure. Many prisons lack proper classrooms, libraries, or even electricity, which makes consistent learning difficult. Societal stigma and limited post-release support systems can undermine the impact of prison education, as ex-inmates often struggle to find acceptance and employment despite their acquired qualifications (Ajah, & Nweke, 2017).

Across Nigeria, correctional education programmes generally include basic literacy, vocational training, and religious instruction, all aimed at equipping inmates with skills for reintegration into society, yet these programmes are constrained by systemic issues such as underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of qualified instructors, and limited access to learning materials (Otodo, 2017). These limitations significantly reduce the effectiveness and accessibility of educational opportunities within correctional centres.

In Akwa Ibom State, empirical studies indicate that educational programmes are available in major custodial centres such as Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Eket, and Ikot Abasi, with a focus on basic and vocational education; however, the absence of tertiary education opportunities and insufficient instructional resources limit their overall impact, although inmates generally perceive these programmes as beneficial for skill acquisition and personal development, inadequate facilities, poor funding, and lack of trained personnel continue to hinder their effectiveness. Additionally, complementary interventions such as religious services have been found to support behavioural change and emotional stability among inmates, thereby enhancing rehabilitation outcomes (Helen et al., 2023). In Cross River State, the literature presents a more critical perspective, with studies showing that participation in educational and vocational programmes does not significantly influence rehabilitation outcomes among inmates, particularly youth offenders (Ekanem & Bassey, 2024). This divergence from global evidence is largely attributed to poor programme implementation, weak curriculum design, and inadequate institutional support systems, which undermine the potential benefits of correctional education (Alaba, 2021).

### **Human Capital Development theory propounded by Gary Becker in 1960**

Gary Becker was an economist who propounded the theory in the 1960s, the theory in adding a significant contribution by applying economic principles to human capital. He viewed training as a paramount aspect of investments that aids in increasing individual's productivity and lifetime earnings. However, it's important to acknowledge that earlier thinkers like Adam Smith and Irving Fisher also scientifically proven and consented to the acceptability for the concept of human capital (Eyo, 2026). The Human capital development theory is a strategic process centered on generating, enhancing and developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals or workers of any organization for the purpose of advancing employees and organizational performance. The proponent considers it as an investment in people, aiming to equip them with the tools they need to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society and the economy. In recent days of management, there have been found a rapidly changing world, organizations and nations require a skilled and adaptable workforce for high performance. Boosting productivity and performance by equipping individuals with relevant skills and knowledge, manpower development helps perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently, leading to increased productivity and improved organizational performance. The essence and applications for the adoption of this theory is given much emphasis as the knowledge, training and skill provided by the Nigerian correctional service for inmates will help with a skill to reduce recidivism and providing them with better opportunities with socioeconomic development

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the descriptive research design with a survey method as information collected from the inmates and correctional service personnel were used in presenting the results of the study. The study population for the research was 2,371, two thousand three hundred and seventy one) being the total number of inmates in Nigerian correctional center in Rivers State. The sample size for this study was 400, determined with

the use of Cochran’s formula propounded in 1977. The simple random sampling was used as the sampling technique in this research. This study adopted both primary and secondary source of data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis and a Simple Regression Analysis in order to arrive at a scientific acceptance. Data were presented in tabular form for easy calculation and comprehension.

### Data Presentation

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of data from the survey, administered through questionnaires to participants in the respective State. The questionnaire consisted of three (3) sections: A, B, and C. Section A contains biographic information of the respondents, while Sections B and C questions bothering on the objectives selected for the study.

### Questionnaire Distribution

400 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants in the selected study areas using the weighted sampling technique, out of the 400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 392 copies were adequately completed and returned. The table below shows the distribution of the completed and returned questionnaires, which is used for the data analysis.

**Table 1:** Frequency of Background Information on Respondents

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	18-24 years	86	21.9
	25-30 years	135	34.4
	31-40 years	110	28.1
	41- 50 years	45	11.5
	51 and above	16	4.1
Education Qualification	SSCE	28	7.1
	ND/NCE	76	19.4
	BSc./ HND/ Post-Graduate	163	41.6
Marital Status	Single	131	33.4
	Married	176	44.9
	Divorced	42	10.7
	Widowed	21	5.4
	Separated	22	5.6
Length stay in the	Less than 1 year	96	24.5
	1-3 years	87	22.2

custody/ Work (Service).			
	4-6 years	102	26.0
	Above 6 years	107	27.3

**Source:** Field Survey (2026)

Table 4.1 offers a detailed depiction of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, highlighting key aspects such as, age distribution, educational qualifications, and marital status.

Beginning with age distribution, a significant majority of respondents fall within the dynamic 25-30 years age group, totaling 135 individuals or 34.4%. Following closely are respondents aged 31-40, which number 110 (28.1%), and those between 18-24 years, totaling 86 (21.9%). The age group of 41-50 years is represented by 45 respondents (11.5%), while the oldest category, consisting of individuals aged 51 years and above, includes 16 participants (4.1%). This distribution suggests that the study primarily encompasses insights from an active and productive demographic, typically in the early to middle stages of their careers.

Turning to educational qualifications, the data highlights a noteworthy level of education among respondents. A substantial 41.6% hold B.Sc./HND degrees, totaling 163 individuals, indicating a well-informed participant base and holders of National Diplomas (ND) or National Certificates in Education (NCE), totaling 76 (19.4%). The least represented group comprises Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) holders, who account for 28 individuals (7.1%). This educational profile suggests that the respondents possess the qualifications necessary to provide thoughtful and informed contributions.

Regarding marital status, the data sheds light on the personal lives of the respondents. A notable majority of 176 individuals (44.9%) are married, reflecting a strong presence of family-oriented perspectives within the study. Following this group are 131 single respondents (33.4%). Additionally, 42 respondents (10.7%) are divorced, while those who are separated and widowed account for 22 (5.6%) and 21 (5.4%), respectively. This demographic information underscores that many respondents likely have familial responsibilities, which may influence their viewpoints and responses.

Looking at the years spent in custody, 96 respondents, which is about 24.5%, had been there for less than a year. Meanwhile, 87 respondents (22.2%) had stayed between 1 and 3 years. A further 102 respondents (26.0%) reported custody durations of 4 to 6 years. Interestingly, the largest group, with 107 respondents or 27.3%, had been in custody for more than 6 years. This shows that a good number of inmates experience long-term stays, especially those staying over 6 years, highlighting the issue of extended incarceration periods within the correctional system.

Lastly, the demographic characteristics presented in the table above suggest a study population that is predominantly young to middle-aged, highly educated, and largely married. This combination of factors provides a robust foundation for understanding the perspectives and experiences shared in the study, ensuring that the analysis remains credible and relevant.

**Table 2:** Responses from the Respondents

1	Inmates have been given the opportunity to write NECO Exams while in custody	106 (27.0%)	162 (41.3%)	20 (5.1%)	11 (2.8%)	93 (23.7%)	392 (100%)
2	The Nigerian Correctional Service offers Inmates with instructors to teach you on how to read and pronounce words	59 (17%)	41 (10%)	158 (45%)	94 (28%)	0	392 (100%)
3	The Nigerian Correctional Service provided Inmates with reading and writing materials for free	35 (8.9%)	48 (12.2%)	97 (24.7%)	155 (39.5%)	57 (14.5%)	392 (100%)
4	Inmates have been given a post primary, secondary school and University education while in custody	143 (36.5%)	126 (32.1%)	21 (5.4%)	52 (13.3%)	50 (12.8%)	392 (100%)

Author Compilation, 2026.

The findings indicate that a majority of inmates 68.3% of inmates agreed or strongly agreed that they received educational assistance, while 7.9% disagreed and 23.7% were uncertain. Additionally, 64.2% confirmed access to free reading and writing materials, compared to 21.1% who disagreed and 14.5% who were uncertain. Finally, 68.6% agreed that they had access to post-primary, secondary, or university education, although 18.7% disagreed and 12.8% were uncertain, suggesting moderate but uneven educational provision.

### Test of Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Nigerian Correctional Service and educational support for inmates in Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between Nigerian Correctional Service and educational support for inmates in Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria

### Data Analysis

In ascertaining the relationship between the Nigerian Correctional Service and educational support for inmates in Rivers State, Nigeria, the ordinary least square simple regression technique was used with the help of SSPS version 20.0, and the following results were obtained.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.289 <sup>a</sup>	.084	.081	1.748

a. Predictors: (Constant), EST

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	108.935	1	108.935	35.661	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1191.340	390	3.055		
	Total	1300.276	391			

a. Dependent Variable: NCS

b. Predictors: (Constant), EST

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.335	.466		7.160	.000
	EST	.566	.095	.289	5.972	.000

a. Dependent Variable: NCS

The regression analysis conducted to examine the effect of Educational Support (EST) on Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. This is evident from the correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.289$ ), which suggests a weak to moderate association. Additionally, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.084$ ) shows that EST explains approximately 8.4% of the variation in NCS. This implies that while EST does contribute to changes in NCS, a significant majority (91.6%) of the variation is influenced by other factors that are not included in the model.

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ( $F = 35.661, p < 0.001$ ), demonstrating that the model fits the data much better than a model without predictors and that EST is a meaningful predictor of NCS. The regression coefficient for EST ( $B = 0.566$ ) shows that a one-unit increase in EST results in a 0.566-unit increase in NCS, establishing a direct relationship between the variables. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta = 0.289$ ) suggests that EST has a modest positive impact on NCS. Furthermore, the t-statistic ( $t = 5.972, p < 0.001$ ) confirms that the effect of EST on NCS is statistically significant and unlikely due to random chance. Based on these results, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it can be concluded that EST has a statistically significant positive influence on NCS, although its overall explanatory power remains moderate.

**Table 4: Educational Supports for Inmates in Maximum Security Custodial Center, Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria.**

Yr.	Educational Support NECO Cert./ National Open University, Rivers state						Total
	FSLC	NECO	BSc/B.A	PGD	M.SC	PHD	
2019	18	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	39
2020	N/A	18	1	N/A	1	1	21
2021	29	N/A	7	12	2	2	52
2022	28	N/A	12	5	2	N/A	47
2023	55	34	18	2	4	2	115
2024	19	29	23	22	3	3	99
2025	44	51	23	5	7	1	131
2026	84	27	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	131
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>65</b>

Source: HR Department of NCS, River State Headquarters, (2026)

### Discussion of Findings

The study showed Educational support for inmates had a positive and moderately strong relationship with NCS ( $R^2 = 0.084$ ). This finding aligns with Becker (1964), who emphasized that investment in human capital enhances future opportunities and productivity. It also supports Petersilia's (2003) findings that educational interventions are vital for successful rehabilitation, backing the idea that combining vocational and educational programmes leads to better correctional outcomes.

The data shows a progressive increase in inmate participation in educational programmes over the years, although with some fluctuations across different categories of educational attainment.

At the basic and secondary education levels, participation in NECO and First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) programmes recorded significant growth over time. For instance, NECO enrolment increased from 18 inmates in 2019 to 84 inmates in 2026, while FSLC participation fluctuated but remained relatively high, peaking at 51 inmates in 2025. This tendency suggests an increasing awareness and acceptance of basic education among inmates, which aligns with the rehabilitative goals of the Nigerian Correctional Service. The growth may also reflect improved access to literacy programmes and institutional support for foundational education.

At the tertiary level, participation through the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) shows gradual but inconsistent development. Undergraduate (UND) enrolment rose from 1 inmate in 2020 to a peak of 23 inmates in 2024 and 2025, indicating a growing interest in higher education among inmates. Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) and Master's (M.Sc.) programmes also recorded modest participation, with PGD reaching 22 inmates in

2024 and M.Sc. peaking at 7 inmates in 2025. However, PhD participation remained very low throughout the study period, with only a few inmates enrolled, reflecting the limited accessibility of advanced academic opportunities within correctional facilities.

The total yearly enrolment figures also demonstrated a general upward trend in educational participation, rising from 39 inmates in 2019 to 131 inmates in both 2025 and 2026. This indicates that educational support programmes are increasingly being integrated into the correctional system and are gradually gaining traction among inmates. The sharp increase observed between 2022 (47 inmates) and 2023 (115 inmates) may be attributed to improved policy implementation, enhanced collaboration with educational institutions, or increased institutional support within the custodial centre. Despite these positive tendencies, the findings also highlight certain inconsistencies and slumps. The absence of entries across several years suggest irregular availability of some educational programmes, particularly at higher levels. This inconsistency may be linked to factors such as inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified instructors, and administrative or security constraints within the maximum security environment in Rivers State.

Considerably, the findings support the human capital development perspective, which posits that investment in education enhances individual productivity and social reintegration. The increasing participation in educational programmes indicates that inmates are responding positively to these opportunities. Though the uneven distribution and limited access to higher-level education suggest that the full potential of educational support as a rehabilitative tool has not yet been realized.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study explored the relationship between the Nigerian Correctional Service's educational support for inmates in River State. The study employed a quantitative research design, with data collected through structured questionnaires administered to inmates. Data analysis was performed using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method with SPSS version 20.0. Seven hypotheses were developed and tested at a 0.05 significance level and the following findings were observed:

The findings revealed that educational support ( $R = 0.194$ ,  $R^2 = 0.038$ ), have positive and statistically significant relationships with the Nigerian Correctional Service, as educational support ( $R = 0.132$ ,  $R^2 = 0.017$ ) showed statistically significant but negative relationships with NCS.

This study offers both empirical and theoretical insights into the role of the Nigerian Correctional Service on educational support, the study finds that vocational and educational training programmes are vital tools for giving inmates practical and marketable skills. These programmes help not only with skill development but also with behavioral reform, boosting self-esteem, and lowering the chances of reoffending. Essentially, they match modern correctional philosophies that focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment.

However, despite their positive and statistically significant contributions, the generally weak strength of the relationships suggests that these programmes operate within systemic limitations.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the role of the Nigerian Correctional Service in promoting educational support and human capital development among inmates in the maximum security custodial centre in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The findings reveal that educational programmes ranging from basic literacy and secondary education (NECO and FSLC) to tertiary education through the National Open University of Nigeria have contributed positively to inmate rehabilitation and personal development.

The study established that there has been a steady increase in inmate participation in educational programmes over the years, indicating growing awareness and institutional efforts toward rehabilitation. These programmes have enhanced inmates' intellectual capacity, improved their employability prospects, and supported behavioral transformation, which are essential for successful reintegration into society. This aligns with the principles of human capital development, which emphasize education and skill acquisition as key drivers of productivity and social stability.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified persistent challenges, including inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, a shortage of qualified instructors, and inconsistent availability of advanced educational programmes. These limitations have constrained the full realization of the rehabilitative goals of the Nigerian Correctional Service, particularly in maximum security environments where security concerns often take precedence.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made: Educational programmes should be strengthened by providing more access to formal education, learning materials, and qualified instructors to improve inmates' intellectual development.

Again, the federal Government, through the federal ministry of interior, should partner with the Rivers state Government and Non-Governmental Organizations in providing learning infrastructure such as writing desks, whiteboards, laptops, computer systems, power infrastructure, and electricity supply to enhance better educational learning for the inmates.

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