INFORMATION PROVISION AND ETHICAL ISSUES: THE CASE OF PRISONERS IN SOUTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Information, though intangible, is a necessity in the life of man be it for economic, politics or research. However, its provision is hindered through policy or ethical considerations. The paper investigates accessibility of information and ethical issues confronting information provision to prisoners in South-west, Nigeria. Stratified and purposive techniques were adopted. Of the 594 long-term prisoners in the 20 prisons in South-west, Nigeria 472 i.e. 79.5% were enumerated for this study. Findings revealed that information are available for vocational programmes such as tailoring, barbing and carpentry at 80.2%, 95.1% and 85.9% respectively. While education especially tertiary rated at just 10.6%. Information on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is abysmally low at 5%. Ethical issues surrounding information rated low and this include restriction 18.5 %, time allocated 5% while privacy and environment where information is given to prisoners were equally low at 10.6% and 6.9% respectively. It was recommended that an information policy be put in place to address ethical issues identified and that prison libraries be established in the long run while public library should be well funded to provide mobile library services to prisons in South-west, Nigeria as it is done in the developed countries.

Keywords: Information provision, Ethical issues, Prisoners rehabilitation, South-west, Nigeria

Introduction

Information has been described as an intangible but an indispensable asset or necessity in all spheres of life, be it political, social or economic. Information becomes an asset when relevant information is accessed timely. It enables the user to make informed decision and guides the user in the right direction. It is in the light of the importance of information that an attempt is going to be made to examine its relevance in an aspect of social situation that has been of concern to governments and non-governmental organizations interested in the well-being and rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria. Information provision is viewed as a necessity for every-day life of individuals, corporate bodies and government. Its significance in the rehabilitation of prison inmates has long been established in the literature. Information has played significant role in various human efforts since the beginning of human race. Besides, Devaurajan and Pulikythies (2011) reasoned that information can be both tangible and intangible; it can be physical or non-physical and it is of fundamental value as money, capital, goods, labour and raw material in business and that information has some specifiable measurable characteristics such as method of collection, utilities and users.

Information originates from the source, begins with the source and ends with the receiver or the user of what is communicated. Olowu (2004) stated that "information entails data, facts, opinions, imaginations, ideas, cultural values, in a variety of media which include print, audio-visual materials and electronic processes" p48. Information becomes useful when it is needed for a particular situation.

However, Chimah and Nwokocha (2013) described information as a resource or tool to be used for a purpose. Hence, it should be comprehensive, accurate, timely, clear, flexible, verifiable, unbiased and quantifiable. To an individual, it must be obtained at a minimal cost. Some of the attributes are part of ethical issues to be examined in this paper. Additionally, Singh & Satija (2006) listed attributes of information as: (1) transforming and reinforcing effects on what is known or believed to be known by human beings; (2) information is used as an aid in decision making; (3) information is the freedom of choice one has in selecting message. Thus, information adds to knowledge, reduces uncertainty and supports decision making. Robinson (2016) is of the opinion that it is essential to provide information because it is essential for the functioning of society, or community.

According to Ayu (2004:1) the prison must be a centre for information and not for punishment, while Kadiri and Haliso (2011) stated that prisoners require two types of information, one, information on entry into the prison and information while serving. The first information is to enable prisoners understand the rules and regulations of the prison. It will also include regular information on issues of interest to individual prisoner such as next date of appearance in court, appointment with Counselors among others while the second information has to do with rehabilitation programmes aimed at preparing prisoners for re-entry into society. Such information will cover socio-political-economy, family and community they will return to as well as relevant technological information. The two types of information should be pre-emptive i.e. the provider should be pro-active in making the required information available for use of prisoners. Many sources of information may be available to prisoners but the prison authority is the major source of information through its various departments. In addition, there are a variety of external agencies (like Prison Information Services in the United Kingdom and Justice Development and Peace Commission in Nigeria) boasting of professionals such as lawyers, doctors, educators, counselors, vocational trainers among others. These professionals provide supplementary information or advisory services. However, lack of integration or communication among these professionals may lead to an uncoordinated and haphazard information provision to prisoners.

When information is provided, it is important to make sure it is easily accessible for the prisoners' use. In doing this cognizance has to be taken of the level of literacy of prisoners. In a prison library for example there should be adequate labeling and directions to materials in view of short period usually allocated for library use. Competent professionals should be available to guide users during period of use (Lehman & Locke, 2005; Lehman, 2011). In order to ensure usefulness of information to rehabilitation of programmes, efforts need be made to tailor information provided towards rehabilitation programmes available in the various prisons so as to be useful to the prisoners.

Statement of the problem

Basically, issue of ethics in information has to do with law and social (especially among professions) responsibility. Ethical consideration is very important in information provision to prisoners. In particular are those which relate to censorship, access and confidentiality. To what extent for example are prisoners allowed to watch television or listen to the radio? What degree of access do prisoners have to various sources of information? How tactful are information providers when responding to information requests of prisoners or what level of confidentiality are prisoners' personal problems are treated? Is the privacy of prisoners recognized between prisoners and information provider, is the environment conducive or is there censorship. Are prisoners allowed to have enough time when seeking information? Do prisoners get information as at the time required? All these have roles to play in providing information to prisoners.

Objectives of Study

Objectives of the study are to:
1. ascertain the level of information accessibility by prisoners in the South-west, Nigeria.
2. find out ethical issues surrounding the provision of information to prisoners in South-west, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives listed, the following research questions are to be answered:

1. how accessible is information to prisoners in the South-west, Nigeria?
2. what are the ethical issues surrounding the provision of information to prisoners in South-west, Nigeria?

Literature Review

According to Orakwe (2011), the first prison to be built in Nigeria was the Broad Street Prison in Lagos by the colonial government in 1872. It was established to take care of minor offences especially those that commit offences that are commercial or business-related. There have been massive transformations in the Service since 1972. It has undergone some reorganization from its modest three Directorates in 1980 to six Directorates in 1993. There was the 1986 reorganization of the Prisons consequent upon the creation of the Customs, Immigrations and Prisons Board and centralization of the administrations of these paramilitary Services in the Board. There was also the removal of the Services from the Civil Service in 1992. It now has a command structure of 8 Zonal commands, 36 State Commands, 1 FCT Command, 155 Prisons including farm centres and 83 satellite prisons. It also has four Training Schools, one Staff College and 3 Borstal Institutions.

In the Nigerian context, prison inmates are made up of convicted persons who are sentenced to serve various terms for crimes committed, as well as Awaiting Trial Persons (ATPs), who are awaiting trial or court judgment. Emphasis on custodial functions of prisons coupled with rising prison population led to consideration of establishing educative and informative programmes and services to help both the ATPs and the convicted ones when eventually they are freed (Enuku, 2001). According to Agomoh and Ogbozor (2006), the functions/objectives of the Nigerian prison include: (a) to keep safe custody of such persons legally detained, (b) to identify the causes of their anti-social behavior during the course of their detention, (c) treat and reform them to become law abiding citizen of a free society and (d) to train them towards their rehabilitation on discharge, generate revenue for the government through prison farms and industries thereby inculcating into them the dignity of labour.

Records have it that Nigerian prisons are populated mostly by youths within the age of 18 and 45 years (Enuku, 2001). Shajobi-Ibikunle (2014) reported that there were 53,841 inmates in Nigerian prisons while maximum capacity remains 46,706. There is evidence of overcrowding in Nigerian Prison System. However, observation revealed that serious overcrowding is noticeable in prisons in big commercial cities of Lagos and Ibadan. Beside overcrowding, training equipment for skill acquisition and recreation are among the top factors calling for immediate intervention for rehabilitation programme in Nigerian prisons. (Nigerian Tribune, January 9, 2016). Often times the deplorable conditions lead to jail breaks in Nigeria (Ogwezzy, 2011).

The assertion was supported by Omale (2013), who listed reasons for jail breaks/riots in Nigerian prisons as overcrowding, trafficking by staff and inmates, poor feeding/nutrition, lack of supervision/poor management, deprivation of right, inadequate staffing, careless transfer of staff and prisoners, inadequate prison clothing and beddings, poor communication and lack of water supply among others. Amnesty International (AI) (2008) listed the conditions of Nigerian Prisons as that of over-crowding, lack of basic needs-beds, food, sanitation, medical services, education and rehabilitation and transport. According to AI, a cell in Ikoyi Prison that was supposed to accommodate 50 inmates had 100 with a single toilet. Inmates especially ATMs were usually locked up and have to eat and pray in that condition all day long. Furthermore, conditions listed above coupled with lack of training and recreational facilities leads to idleness (Shajobi-Ibikunle, 2014).

Information provision as a theory has not been given extensive attention by scholars in general, some scholars mainly in the medical sciences have tried to find out the influence of information provision to patients diagnosed with life threatening diseases and how this has affected their coping strategies. These studies provided other researchers with measurement templates with which to evaluate information provision. They were of the opinion that level of satisfaction with information provided is a function of 'level or amount of information provision" and "source of information provided", relevance or usefulness of information provided and the importance of tailoring information provided to the needs of patients. Overall results from these various findings

showed that recipients of information provision were generally satisfied with the information they received, that it helped them to better understand their situations and to make more meaningful decisions. In addition, majority of patients wanted as much information as possible about their disease, treatment and rehabilitation (Ormandy, 2010). Robinson (2016) views information as an essential element for the functioning of society or community. Without a means to provide facts and data to the citizen, making informed decision or being part of the society will be difficult. In view of the advantages from information provision, it becomes necessary to explore usefulness and perception of another special group, prisoners, viz-a-viz information provision.

Prisoners, as described by Ozioko, Nwabueze and Eze (2014) simply put are people who are incarcerated and whose movements are restricted because of the crimes they committed. Prisoners have been seen to have the same reading interests and information needs as other people; but with a good number of them having low educational skills, they often experience difficulties in meeting their information needs. Ajagwa (2005) enumerated prisoners' information needs as ranging from legal needs, religious, health, educational, vocational, and recreational to financial needs. They also need to acquire further education as well as occupational and vocational skills to help them re-adapt into the society.

Among all the possible ways of providing information to prisoners, the prison library takes the lead in providing services and materials through which the prisoners can meet their various information needs. The recognition of the place of the prison library in meeting the prisoners' information needs contributed to the development of prison libraries. Changes were fueled by the prison reform movement that advocated rehabilitation over punishment, education for re-entry to the society and the rights of the prisoners. Also, the recognition of the prisoners' right to information is contained in the United Nations (Rule 40) standard Minimal Rules for the treatment of prisoners. It was recommended that every institution shall have an adequately stocked library for use of all categories of prisoners and the prisoners shall be encouraged to use it. Eze and Dike (2014) aligning with IFLA (2005) agree that prison library collection should include materials to meet the informational, educational, cultural, recreational, and rehabilitative needs of the prison population.

In 2003, the UNDP examined access to information principally from political perspectives of transparency, active participation, responsiveness and accountability in public and developmental issues. It went further to identify the fact that the poor and the vulnerable often lack information that is essential for their lives in the areas of basic rights, entitlement, public services, health, education, work opportunities and public expenditure budgets. Of the foregoing, basic rights, health, education and work opportunities can be seen as being of direct influence on prisoners anticipating re-entry into society. It further noted that the poor and vulnerable groups often have limited access to information. It therefore suggests means through which those that are information-disadvantaged could access relevant and desired information. These are formal and informal. The formal ones are print press, internet, television, telephone, national and community radio(s). While the informal media include theatre, music, dance, puppetry, soap operas, public address, notice boards, from other people such as colleagues.

These suggestions are inherent in the mandates of libraries especially public ones as the library is an organized collection of sources of information and similar resources, made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. A library's collection can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blue-ray Discs, e-books, audio-books, databases and other formats.

Ethical Issues in Information Provision to Prisoners

Ethics originates from the Greek word 'Ethikos' which means 'arising from habits' has graduated overtime to a brand of philosophy (Hoq, 2012), which studies principles of right and wrong that ought to guide human conducts. Basically, ethics is a legal, society and value driven idea. It is manifested legally in the areas of general behavior and professional conduct. Hence, professionals associations have guideline written on standard on standard expected of practitioners, information professionals inclusive.

Ethics in information originally on what information to release clients and it is usually driven by what society consider right or wrong especially on issues of culture (religion), politics or security (Hoq, 2012). The dilemma of information vis-à-vis ethics becomes complex for practitioners with the advent of information and communication technology, which makes it difficult to control flow, amount and type of available to clients (Matingwa, 2015). Hoq (2012) opined that the issue of ethics in information manifests from the moment the librarian is thinking of what book to acquire, use of computers, what to charge and photocopying. All the above creates contradictions for information professionals who wants to give the reader what they want and at the same time has to be mindful of extant laws on issues of security and intellectual property.

Hence, information ethics is concerned with use and misuse of information with focus on intellectual property, censorship, data integrity, privacy and access to information among others. Issues surrounding censorship, privacy, rights internet and access are relevant to prison because of its special setting and clients. While intellectual properties along with globalization may not have direct bearings to information provision in prisons and are not to be considered Mbofung and Popoola (2014) discussed extensively legal and ethical issues information and library services and established that it is more relevant in the academic and research sector.

Lack of favourable information policy for prisoners is also a barrier, Eze and Dike (2014) opined that the idea of offering education, rehabilitation and meaningful employment to prisoners is lacking in developing countries like Nigeria let alone the rights of offenders to information. Zybet (2011) noted non-recognition of information in the rehabilitation process by some prisoners and correctional staff, who, do not see usefulness of library and library staff or information in the rehabilitation process. The common barriers noted in other climes are also germane in addition to other peculiar problems which serve as barriers to information provision in Nigerian prisons. In countries where prison libraries are common and established, there are the issues of ethics in information or library services provision.

Privacy issue in information provision and accessibility has to do with environment where information is provided. Article III of the **Code of Ethics of the American Library Association** (2008: 1) urges librarians to 'protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted'.

Smith (nd) relying on the American Library Association Guideline emphasized that prison librarians should ensure delivery of quality information, equity of service, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, personal ethics adherence with professional code of ethics. Similarly, the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria in 12.4 of its **Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Librarians** urges librarians to respect the right of a user to privacy. In view of the situation surrounding prison conditions and environment, it is pertinent to examine how ethical issues affect information provision and accessibility in prisons in South-west, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design and this was backed up with observations. The survey approach enabled the researchers to acquire qualitative information while observation enabled them to assess physical facilities and implementation of policies available for information provision. The target population for this study were prisoners on long-term conviction i.e. those that were sentenced to serve two or more years and have spent at least one year in prison in South-West, Nigeria. As at the time of field work 472 long-term prisoners were available for the study, hence total enumeration approach was adopted for this study. Stratified and purposive techniques were adopted in identifying respondents for the research. During the field work, 594 prisoners were long-term prisoners out of which 472 have spent one year and above in incarceration. The 472 prisoners, which were 79.5% of long term prisoners in South-west, Nigeria were surveyed and total enumeration technique was adopted.

Table I: Population and Sample Size

	Number Of long-term during field work	Actual Number Enumerated	
ZONE A: Lagos and Ogun		**Male**	**Female**
Maximum Kirikiri	59	45	---
Medium Kirikiri	Not Surveyed		
Female Kirikiri	16	---	16
Ikoyi	18	12	---
Badagry	Not Surveyed		
Abeokuta Prison	25	19	----
Sagamu Prison	14	11	---
Ijebu-Ode Prison	30	20	04
Abeokuta, Obaa	15	09	---
Ilaro	32	27	05
Ago Farm Centre	08	08	---
Total	**217**	**151**	**25**
ZONE F			
Ado-Ekiti	18	11	03
Owo	57	15	---
Akure (Maximum)	30	24	---
Ondo Male	34	28	---
Ondo Female	04	----	04
Okitipupa	24	20	---
Ilesa	89	54	06
Ile-Ife	26	20	---
Agodi, Ibadan	98	77	---
Oyo	34	32	02
Total	**377**	**281**	**15**
Grand Total Zone A & F	**594**	**432**	**40**

The survey was carried out in 20 prisons and a Farm Centre located in South-West, Nigeria i.e. Zones A and F of the Nigerian Prison system. Two instruments were used for data collection namely (questionnaire and personal observation). One structured questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire titled "Information Provision in the Rehabilitation of prisoners in Nigeria (IPRP)" was administered. All items in the questionnaire follow a Likert scale and allowance was made for 'others' in some sections which enabled respondents to suggest related idea(s) not covered by the questionnaire. A 'check list for observations in prisons' was made to guide the researchers in assessing information facilities and resources available in the prisons.

In designing IPRP, reference was made to similar ones by authors like Omagbemi & Odunewu (2008), Kadiri & Haliso (2011), Tenibiaje (2010), Vandersbosch (2005) and Eze and Dike (2014). These authors had at various times looked at issues concerning the library and information provision viz-a-viz prisons and prisoners. Personal observation on the other hand involves examination of facilities, equipment and information resources available to prisoners in prisons (where access is allowed) located in South-west, Nigeria. A pilot study was conducted at the Ilorin Prison, Kwara State. 40 inmates of the prison responded. The reliability coefficient was determined using Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 and above. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive Statistics such as percentage distribution, Mean and Standard Deviation.

Table II: Highlights of level of Information available to Prisoners in South-west, Nigeria

Rehabilitation Programmes	Very Accessible (%)	Accessible (%)	Just Accessible (%)	Not Accessible (%)	Mean	Std Dev.
Vocational Programmes						
Tailoring	80.2	2.3	12.9	4.6	3.7	0.7
Barbing	95.1	2.5	0.8	1.6	3.6	0.9
Welding	71.1	27.0	3.0	1.0	3.6	0.6
Health	71.1	27.0	3.0	1.0	3.6	0.6
Vocational Programmes						
Carpentry	85.9	7.1	2.0	5.1	3.4	1.1
Education						
Tertiary	10.6	0.9	25.9	62.5	2.0	0.8
Vocational Programmes						
ICT training						
- Computer repairing	5.0	10.6	52.2	32.2	1.9	0.8
- Computer programming	6.9	6.6	44.7	41.9	1.8	0.8
- Word processing	7.3	6.9	44.4	41.6	1.8	0.8

As shown in Table II, apart from formal educational programme, information on the various vocational programmes in place were considered highly accessible in most of the prisons. These vocational programmes according to the respondents included tailoring Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.7), barbing Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.6), welding Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.6), carpentry Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.4), painting Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.0) and home economics Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.0) among others. On the other hand, information on ICT made up of computer training Mean ($\bar{x}$=1.9), computer programming Mean ($\bar{x}$=1.8) and word processing Mean ($\bar{x}$=1.8) were not all that accessible possibly due to the fact that there were limited numbers of it in most of the prisons. Besides, additional treatments such as drug and sex information were also highly accessible to the prisoners in most prisons in South-west, Nigeria.

Other highly accessible rehabilitation programmes included counseling Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.0), additional treatment such as drugs Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.6), sex Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.1), health Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.6), legal Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.8), recreational Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.0) and religious programmes Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.0). Table 1 highlighted the highest of accessible information and the least available information to prisoners in South-west, Nigeria. From these outcomes, what is obvious is that information on majority of the programmes is accessible because people come from both within and outside the prisons to offer these programmes. In most prisons, Prison official with education background are saddled with responsibilities of teaching the inmates with concentration on humanities, basic numeracy and literacy.

Table III: Highlights of Ethical Issues in Information Provision for Prisoners

Ethical Issues	Very High Level (%)	High Level (%)	Low Level (%)	Very Low Level (%)	Mean (%)	Std Dev.
Timeliness: Is information provided immediately it is needed?	53.4	25.3	11.9	9.4	3.2	1.0
Do you have to pay to receive information	46.7	19.4	15.7	18.2	2.9	1.2
Is there restriction in information given?	18.5	35.8	23.3	22.4	2.5	1.0
Is privacy respected when information is being given?	10.6	.9	62.5	25.9	2.0	0.8
Is time allocated for information seeking adequate?	5.0	10.6	52.2	32.2	1.9	0.8

Environment: Is the environment where information is given satisfactory?	6.9	6.6	44.7	41.9	1.8	0.8

As shown in Table III, the top ethical issue in information provision to the prisoners is timeliness Mean ($\bar{x}$=3.2), followed by payment to receive some of the basic human rights information, Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.9), as well as restriction in the choice of information available for the inmates. Others with relatively low level and very low level included comprehensive, Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.2), satisfaction with programmes prisoners are allowed to watch on the TV, radio and associates, Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.1). Respect for privacy was low Mean ($\bar{x}$=2.0), inadequate time for information seeking Mean ($\bar{x}$=1.9) while ethical issues surrounding environment was very low in comparison with other ethical issues. What these imply is that prison inmates are facing a lot of ethical issues that have direct effect on their human rights in the area of information accessibility. This also calls for a policy intervention and policy review about Nigerian prisons ethical dimensions.

Discussion of the Findings

This study established that there are no prison libraries in South-west, Nigeria in the real sense of what a library should be when compared with fairly acceptable situation in the nearby South-east of Nigeria (Eze & Dike, 2014). In the South-east, rooms, though small in size, were distinctly designated prison libraries. On the contrary, offices of welfare officers and or counselors serve as prison libraries in most South-west, Nigeria prisons. This shows that the situation has not changed from what Womboh (1991) reported that Nigerian prisons lack library facilities. More so when compared with trends in the developed countries, where legislations are reviewed periodically and adequate and improved funding is made available as reported respectively by Bowe (2011) and Zybet (2011).

In the area of staffing, there is no professional librarian in any of the prison visited. Libraries and their collections are managed by welfare officers without training in librarianship. Access to ICT is limited. In one of the prisons studied, only two inmates have access to laptops which they use for their studies only. The laptops are usually withdrawn from them most of the time. In another prison, where computers are available, they are used for training when the volunteer instructor is around to tutor inmates. In some prisons, where televisions are available, inmates are allowed to watch religious programmes only while in others television and radio are not available at all. This is contrary to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2006 (4XII) of 13 May, 1997 and UNESCO Public Manifesto of 2005.

Issue of privacy in information seeking and accessibility is not encouraging. Programmes watched on television or listened to on radio are closely monitored. In most prisons, visitors are received in offices with prison officers in attendance. And in most cases, three or more inmates receive visitors in such offices at the same time in the presence of prison officials and other independent visitors, like the researcher. Hence, it could be concluded that there is no privacy policy in place as far as prisons in South-west, Nigeria are conncerned and by extension in Nigeria when compared to advanced countries, where prisoners enjoy a measure of privacy when receiving visitors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for policy intervention:

1. There is the need for standard information policy that will catalog minimum information provision conditions to prisoners e.g. radio and television as practice varies from prison to prison, which will include ethical considerations so that inmates can secure information necessary for effective rehabilitation programme and process.
2. Prison libraries be established in prisons in South-west, Nigeria. Where establishing prison libraries is not visible in the short-run, Public Libraries need to be mandated and well funded to take up the challenge of providing mobile library services as it is done in some states in the United States of America among others.

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