

Research Article

Assessment of vocational agricultural skills contents of rehabilitation programmes for inmates in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the vocational agricultural skills contents of rehabilitation programmes for inmates in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres in Cross River State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 206 inmates, while 134 inmates were selected using a 65.05% sampling technique through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Assessment of Vocational Agricultural Skills Contents of Rehabilitation Programme Questionnaire (AVASCRPQ). The instrument contained 10 items structured on a dichotomous response format of Yes and No. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation, University of Cross River State and Correctional Education Fellowship Centre, Calabar. A pilot test was conducted using 30 inmates in Calabar Correctional Centre, Cross River State, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square test were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that skills in vocational crop production and poultry farming were the dominant agricultural rehabilitation activities, while fish farming was largely absent. Results further showed that government support for rehabilitation programmes was inadequate, with major constraints including lack of funding, inadequate equipment and shortage of trained personnel. The hypothesis test indicated that agricultural contents significantly influence inmates' skill acquisition. The study concluded that agricultural rehabilitation programmes play a vital role in inmates' skill development but are constrained by poor implementation and inadequate support. The study recommended that correctional authorities and government should strengthen funding, expand agricultural training facilities and employ qualified instructors to enhance effective skill acquisition among inmates.

Keywords: Correctional centres; Inmates; Rehabilitation programmes and Vocational Agricultural Skills.

1. Introduction

Correctional institutions across the world are primarily established not only for the punishment of offenders but also for their reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration into society (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2015). Modern correctional philosophy emphasize rehabilitation as an important mechanism for reducing criminal behavior and recidivism among inmates (Craig & Rogers, 1993). Rehabilitation programmes are therefore designed to equip inmates with relevant vocational, educational, social and life skills that can enable them to become productive citizens after release. Among the numerous rehabilitation programmes available in correctional centres, vocational agricultural skills training has remained one of the most practical and widely adopted vocational components because of its economic, social and occupational benefits (Coppedge & Strong, 1990).

Agriculture plays a significant role in the economic development of many nations, especially developing countries like Nigeria where a large percentage of the population depends on farming and related agricultural productive for livelihood (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2020). The agricultural sector provides employment opportunities, food security, income generation and entrepreneurial development. Consequently, integrating vocational agricultural skills to rehabilitation programmes in correctional institutions has become increasingly important because such programmes expose inmates to productive vocational activities capable of improving their employability and self-reliance after incarceration.

Vocational Agricultural skills of rehabilitation programmes generally include crop production, animal husbandry, fish farming, and poultry production aimed at

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developing occupational competencies among inmates. These vocational agricultural skills are intended to provide inmates with practical knowledge, technical skills, work ethics and entrepreneurial abilities that can support their social and economic reintegration into society. Participation in agricultural activities also keeps inmates meaningfully engaged, promotes discipline, reduces idleness, and contributes to psychological stability within correctional facilities.

Skill acquisition refers to the process through which individuals develop practical abilities, competencies and technical knowledge required for productive engagement in specific occupations or trades (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In correctional settings, skill acquisition programmes are designed to prepare inmates for gainful employment and self-employment after release from prison. Effective skill acquisition programmes are expected to reduce dependence on criminal activities, improve economic survival and promote successful reintegration into society. Inmates who acquire relevant vocational and agricultural skills are more likely to become economically productive and socially responsible individuals upon release.

Scholars have emphasized that vocational agricultural rehabilitation programmes provide inmates with employable skills capable of promoting self-reliance and reducing recidivism. Coppedge and Strong (1990) observed that agricultural education programmes in prisons serve as important vocational tools for inmate rehabilitation because they expose inmates to practical farming experiences and occupational training that enhance their productive capacity after incarceration. They further argued that correctional farms and agricultural workshops have historically contributed to the development of work ethics, discipline and employable skills among inmates.

Similarly, Raji and Obele (2020) reported that crop farming and other vocational training programmes positively enhanced inmates' creativity, employability, teamwork and self-reliance. According to their findings, inmates who participated in vocational agricultural activities developed practical competencies that could facilitate their reintegration into society upon release. In another related study, Abba and Aidi (2021) argued that vocational skill acquisition programmes in prisons are economically beneficial because they prepare inmates for productive living after imprisonment. Their study showed that inmates who participated in vocational skills activities acquired useful skills capable of improving their socio-economic conditions and reducing dependence on criminal behaviour after release.

Furthermore, Nseobot and Collins (2022) maintained that inmate-led agricultural entrepreneurship programmes promote self-confidence, responsibility and economic independence among inmates. Studies revile that participation in farming activities enables inmates to develop

entrepreneurial abilities and practical experiences that can support sustainable livelihoods after incarceration. Inusa (2021) also reported that vocational skill acquisition programmes significantly contributed to inmates' reformation and reduction of recidivism among ex-convicts in Nigeria. These findings suggest that agricultural and other vocational rehabilitation programmes can serve as effective tools for improving inmates' behavioral adjustment and economic empowerment after incarceration.

Despite these positive views, some scholars have expressed critical concerns regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in prisons. Craig and Rogers (1993) argued that some prison vocational programmes fail to achieve meaningful rehabilitation because of inadequate implementation, poor programme coordination and insufficient resources. They stressed that vocational training may have limited impact where correctional institutions lack qualified instructors, modern facilities and post-release support systems for inmates. In the same vein, Uche (1995) asserted that vocational training in prisons should not merely focus on keeping inmates occupied but should be properly structured to address inmates' future employment needs and societal reintegration. He argued that poorly organized vocational programmes may not significantly reduce recidivism if inmates are unable to apply the acquired skills meaningfully after release.

Empirical studies have further demonstrated the importance of vocational and agricultural rehabilitation programmes in correctional institutions. Raji and Obele (2025) conducted a study on the effectiveness of vocational education and training for rehabilitation of prison inmates in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study examined how vocational programmes such as crop farming, carpentry and tailoring enhanced inmates' skill acquisition and reintegration into society. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised inmates, prison officials, and vocational instructors, while a stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 200 respondents consisting of 150 inmates and 50 prison officials/instructors. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled Effectiveness of Vocational Education and Training for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates Questionnaire (EVETRPIQ) alongside structured interviews. The questionnaire adopted a 4-point response format of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by experts, while the reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained for the instrument. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that agricultural skills training, particularly crop farming, significantly enhanced inmates' creativity, employability, teamwork and self-reliance.

Abba and Aidi (2016) carried out a study on the economic benefits of vocational skills acquisition programmes on prison inmates in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study focused on the contribution of vocational and agricultural skill acquisition programmes to inmates' economic empowerment and rehabilitation. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 571 prison inmates in Kaduna Central Prison, from which 420 respondents were randomly selected. The instrument used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The instrument adopted a structured response format. The questionnaire was validated by experts, while a reliability coefficient index of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument. Data collected were analysed using tables and percentages. The findings indicated that vocational and agricultural programmes positively contributed to inmates' acquisition of productive skills and prepared them for useful living after incarceration.

Uche, Uche, Ezumah, Ebue, Okafor and Ezegbe (2015) conducted a study on the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian prisons using Enugu Prison as the area of study. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 145 inmates in Enugu Prison, and all the inmates were studied. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire contained items on vocational training, agricultural activities and rehabilitation effectiveness. The instrument adopted a simple structured response format. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that rehabilitation programmes existed in the prison and included agricultural and vocational activities such as carpentry, tailoring, welding, and arts/crafts. However, the study found that inadequate funding and poor facilities limited the effectiveness of the rehabilitation programmes in promoting inmates' skill acquisition.

Inusa (2021) conducted a study on the perceived impact of vocational skills acquisition on reformation and reduction of recidivism among ex-convicts of Gombe Central Correctional Centre, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of ex-convicts of the correctional center, while a sample of 30 ex-convicts was used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by specialists in Measurement and Evaluation. The questionnaire adopted a Likert-type response format. A pilot test was conducted in Maximum Security Prison Maiduguri, Borno State to determine the reliability of the instrument. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings showed that vocational skills acquisition programmes had significant positive effects on inmates' reformation and reduction of

recidivism. The study further revealed that vocational training enhanced inmates' productive abilities and social adjustment after release.

Abba and Alkali (2021) investigated the enhancement of economic well-being of custodial inmates through vocational skills acquisition programmes in Katsina State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 762 inmates in 11 custodial centres in Katsina State, while a sample of 351 respondents was deliberately selected. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Enhancing Economic Well-being of Custodial Inmates through Vocational Skills Acquisition Programmes (QEEWOCITVSAP). The instrument adopted a 4-point Likert response format. Face validation of the instrument was carried out by three experts, while a reliability coefficient index of 0.80 was obtained. Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that inmates benefited substantially from vocational and agricultural skill acquisition programmes, which improved their economic well-being and self-reliance after incarceration.

The effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian correctional centres is often undermined by persistent challenges such as overcrowding, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate funding, shortages of trained personnel, and limited access to vocational training materials and educational resources. These systemic constraints significantly reduce the capacity of correctional facilities to achieve their rehabilitation and reintegration objectives (Awwal, Yusuf & Daniel, 2025).. Although previous studies have examined vocational rehabilitation and skill acquisition among inmates, several critical gaps still exist in the literature. Many of the existing studies focused broadly on vocational education without specifically examining vocational agricultural skills of rehabilitation programmes as a distinct variable influencing inmates' skill acquisition. Most previous studies concentrated on prisons located in northern and south-western parts of Nigeria, with limited empirical attention given to correctional institutions in Cross River State, particularly Ikom and Obubra prisons.

Many earlier studies also examined vocational programmes generally without adequately assessing the specific vocational agricultural skills available to inmates and their direct contribution to skill acquisition. Furthermore, some of the reviewed studies focused mainly on recidivism reduction, economic empowerment, or rehabilitation effectiveness without specifically assessing how vocational agricultural skills influence inmates' acquisition of practical vocational skills. Methodological gaps were equally observed because some studies relied on small sample sizes, descriptive analyses, and generalized rehabilitation indicators that may not adequately capture the specific realities of

agricultural rehabilitation programmes in correctional centres. The need for the present study therefore arises from the necessity to assess the agricultural skills of rehabilitation programmes for inmates in Ikom and Obubra prisons and determine their influence on inmates' skill acquisition.

The study is justified because it will provide empirical evidence on the adequacy and effectiveness of agricultural rehabilitation activities in correctional institutions within Cross River State. The findings of the study may assist prison administrators, policymakers, vocational educators and government agencies in improving vocational agricultural rehabilitation programmes for inmates. The study may also contribute to the existing body of knowledge on correctional education, vocational rehabilitation and inmates' skill acquisition in Nigeria, while helping to identify areas requiring improvement in the implementation of agricultural rehabilitation programmes for better rehabilitation outcomes, economic empowerment and successful reintegration of inmates into society after incarceration.

1.1. Research Question

One research question guided the study:

- (i) To what extent do the vocational agricultural contents of the rehabilitation programme influence the skill acquisition of inmates in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres?

1.2. Statement of Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated for the study:

- (i) The vocational agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes do not significantly influence the skill acquisition of inmates in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain data from respondents on existing conditions without manipulating any variable. The study was carried out in two correctional institutions in Cross River State, namely Ikom and Obubra correctional centres. The population of the study comprised 206 inmates, made up of 97 inmates from Ikom correctional centre (92 males and 5 females) and 109 inmates from Obubra correctional centre (107 males and 2 females). This population was considered adequate for drawing valid conclusions about the vocational agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes in the selected correctional centres.

The sample size for the study was determined using a 65.05% sampling technique, resulting in a total of 134 inmate respondents selected from the population of 206 inmates. In addition, correctional officials directly involved in the administration and implementation of rehabilitation programmes were purposively selected to provide

information on issues relating to government sponsorship, funding, and institutional support, as inmates might not possess accurate or comprehensive information on these aspects. The sampling technique adopted for the inmates was simple random sampling, which gave every inmate an equal opportunity of being selected for the study. This method was chosen to ensure fairness, minimize selection bias, and enhance the representativeness of the sample across the two correctional centres. The inclusion of correctional officials further strengthened the validity and reliability of the data obtained on administrative and government-related matters.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: Assessment of Vocational Agricultural Skills Contents of Rehabilitation Programme Questionnaire (AVASCRPQ). The AVASCRPQ was divided into three sections: Section A contained the informed consent of respondents; Section B collected demographic information of respondents; while Section C contained research variables of the study. Section C was further structured into three clusters: items 1–3 assessed rehabilitation programmes carried out in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres; items 4–6 examined special allocation from government on rehabilitation programmes; while items 7–10 investigated reasons why agricultural programmes are not effectively carried out in the two correctional centres. The instrument adopted a dichotomous response format of Yes and No, where respondents were required to tick (✓) their appropriate responses.

The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation, University of Cross River State, Calabar and Correctional Education Fellowship Centre, Calabar to ensure content and face validity. A pilot test was conducted using 30 inmates in Calabar Correctional Centre, Cross River State, who were not part of the main study population. Data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents with the assistance of prison officials to ensure proper completion and retrieval of responses for analysis.

3. Results

Decision Rule: For all items, responses were coded as: Yes = 2 and No = 1, Thus: Mean ≥ 1.50 = Accepted and Mean < 1.50 = Rejected

For hypothesis testing: Reject H_0 if $p \leq 0.05$ and Accept H_0 if $p > 0.05$

3.1. Results for Research Question

Research question: To what extent do the vocational agricultural contents of the rehabilitation programme influence the skill acquisition of inmates in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres?

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Agricultural Rehabilitation Programmes (N = 134)

S/N	Item Statement	Yes (f)	No (f)	Mean	Decision
1	Crop programme exists	94	40	1.70	High
2	Poultry farming programme exists	80	54	1.60	High
3	Fish farming programmes exists	60	74	1.45	Low

Table 1 shows that crop production (Mean = 1.70) and poultry farming (Mean = 1.60) are available agricultural rehabilitation programmes in Ikom and Obubra correctional

centres. However, fish farming (Mean = 1.45) was not adequately available. This implies that agricultural rehabilitation contents are partially implemented, with emphasis on crop and poultry farming, while aquaculture-related training is weak or absent.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Government Support (N = 134)

S/N	Item Statement	Yes (f)	No (f)	Mean	Decision
4	Government provides funding for rehabilitation programmes	50	84	1.38	Low
5	Agricultural materials are supplied regularly	40	94	1.30	Low
6	Training equipment is adequately provided	34	100	1.25	Low

Table 2 indicates that respondents generally disagreed that there is adequate government support for rehabilitation programmes to be low. All items recorded mean scores be-

low the criterion mean of 1.50, showing inadequate funding, poor supply of agricultural materials, and insufficient training equipment in both correctional centres.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on Constraints (N = 134)

S/N	Item Statement	Yes (f)	No (f)	Mean	Decision
7	Lack of funding affects implementation	114	20	1.85	High
8	Inadequate agricultural tools/equipment	107	27	1.80	High
9	Lack of trained personnel	101	33	1.75	High
10	Overcrowding affects programme delivery	94	40	1.70	High

Table 3 shows that all listed factors are major constraints affecting agricultural rehabilitation programmes in Ikom and Obubra prisons. Lack of funding (Mean = 1.85) was the most critical challenge, followed by inadequate tools, lack of

trained personnel, and overcrowding. This suggests that implementation challenges significantly hinder effectiveness of agricultural skill acquisition programmes.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test Analysis

Variable	N	df	X ² -cal.	X ² -crit.	p-value	Decision
Agricultural contents vs skill acquisition	134	1	42.34	3.84	0.000	Reject H ₀

3.2. Results for Hypothesis

The hypothesis, Vocational Agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes have no significant influence on inmates' skill acquisition in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres.

A Chi-square test of independence was used. Table 4 shows that the calculated Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 42.34$) is greater than the critical value (3.84) at 0.05 level of significance, with p-value (0.000) less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that vocational agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes significantly influence inmates' skill acquisition in Ikom and Obubra correctional centres.

5. Discussion

Agricultural Rehabilitation Programmes and Inmates' Skill Acquisition

The findings revealed that agricultural rehabilitation programmes in Ikom and Obubra Correctional Centres are partially implemented, with crop production and poultry farming being more prominent than fish farming. This finding agrees with Coppedge and Strong (1990), who observed that agricultural education programmes in correctional institutions often concentrate on basic farming activities due to infrastructural and resource limitations. The low availability of aquaculture programmes indicates a

restricted scope of agricultural training and may limit inmates' opportunities to acquire diverse agricultural competencies required for modern agribusiness.

The study further revealed that government support for agricultural rehabilitation programmes is low. Respondents reported inadequate funding, irregular supply of agricultural materials, and insufficient training equipment. This finding supports Craig and Rogers (1993), who argued that rehabilitation programmes frequently experience implementation difficulties because of inadequate funding and weak institutional support. The result also corroborates Uche (1995), who maintained that vocational programmes in correctional institutions are often poorly resourced and inadequately implemented.

The study additionally identified lack of funding, inadequate agricultural equipment, shortage of trained personnel, and overcrowding as major constraints affecting programme implementation. These findings are consistent with Raji and Obele (2025), who reported that infrastructural deficiencies and inadequate resources hinder effective vocational training in correctional facilities. Similarly, Abba and Aidi (2021) emphasized that insufficient resources reduce the effectiveness of skill acquisition programmes and limit their contribution to inmate empowerment and reintegration.

Finally, the hypothesis test established that vocational agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes significantly influence inmates' skill acquisition. This finding agrees with Inusa (2021), who reported that vocational training enhances inmates' rehabilitation and productive capacities. It also aligns with Nseobot and Collins (2022), who found that agricultural entrepreneurship programmes promote employability, self-reliance, and social reintegration among inmates after release.

6. Conclusion

This study concluded that vocational agricultural contents of rehabilitation programmes significantly influence the skill acquisition of inmates in Ikom and Obubra Correctional Centres. The findings revealed that crop production and poultry farming programmes are relatively available and constitute the major agricultural rehabilitation activities offered to inmates, whereas fish farming programmes are inadequately provided. This indicates that agricultural rehabilitation programmes are implemented to a limited extent, with greater emphasis on selected agricultural enterprises.

The study further concluded that government support for agricultural rehabilitation programmes is inadequate, as evidenced by insufficient funding, irregular supply of agricultural materials, and inadequate provision of training equipment. These deficiencies adversely affect the quality and effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts within the correctional centres.

In addition, the study established that lack of funding,

inadequate agricultural tools and equipment, shortage of trained personnel, and overcrowding are major constraints hindering the successful implementation of agricultural rehabilitation programmes. These challenges limit inmates' opportunities to acquire practical agricultural skills needed for productive engagement and successful reintegration into society.

Finally, the study established a significant relationship between vocational agricultural rehabilitation contents and inmates' skill acquisition. Therefore, the availability and effective implementation of agricultural rehabilitation programmes play a crucial role in enhancing inmates' acquisition of vocational skills and improving their prospects for self-reliance and social reintegration after release.

Recommendations:

1. Government should increase funding for correctional agricultural rehabilitation programmes to improve infrastructure and training capacity.
2. Prison authorities should expand agricultural training to include modern practices such as fish farming and agribusiness entrepreneurship.
3. Qualified agricultural instructors should be recruited to enhance the quality of skill training delivered to inmates.
4. Adequate training tools, inputs and farm equipment should be provided for effective hands-on learning.
5. Rehabilitation programmes should be integrated with post-release support systems to ensure continuity of acquired skills.

Abbreviations

AVASCRPQ	Assessment of Vocational Agricultural Skills Contents of Rehabilitation Programme Questionnaire
EVETRPIQ	Effectiveness of Vocational Education and Training for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates Questionnaire
QEEWOCITVSAP	Questionnaire on Enhancing Economic Well-being of Custodial Inmates through Vocational Skills Acquisition Programmes.
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization.

Author Contributions

Lawrence Ikpi Eni: Conceptualization, Investigation, Validation, Writing-Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Project Administration, Methodology,

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no known competing financial interests, professional affiliations or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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