

The Influence Of Criminal Justice System On Criminal Behaviour Control Among Inmates In Maiduguri Maximum Correctional Centre

¹Dr. Asuquo Samuel Princewill

²Mr. Ojo Babatunde Samson

³Mrs Maryamu Obidah

¹ Crifosec Nigeria Limited, Rivers State Nigeria.

¹ Samuelprincewill25@gmail.com

² Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria

³ Crifosec Nigeria Limited, Nigeria

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Abstract

The efficiency of the criminal justice system in reducing criminal activity remains a major concern, particularly in developing nations where institutional problems typically impair offender rehabilitation. This study examined inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates in the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Nigeria. Specifically, the study analysed inmates' perceptions of criminal justice system effectiveness, institutional problems, ethical practices, rehabilitation programmes, and their perceived effects on criminal activity. A cross-sectional survey design was chosen. Data were acquired from 368 inmates selected by purposive sampling from an estimated inmate population of approximately 4,700. A standardised questionnaire constructed from proven criminological and correctional literature was used for data collection. The instrument revealed satisfactory content validity and internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings indicate that inmates generally perceived the criminal justice system as effective, notably regarding the preservation of legal rights, ethical conduct, and rehabilitation activities. However, participants noted major institutional impediments, including judicial delays, prison overcrowding, inadequate counselling services, poor rehabilitation programmes, limited access to legal representation, and ineffective inter-agency coordination. Although many offenders indicated remorse and aspirations to adopt law-abiding lifestyles following release, some continued to report criminogenic attitudes, demonstrating that incarceration alone is insufficient to induce enduring behavioural change. Respondents also identified psychiatric assistance, vocational training, educational courses, and fair treatment as essential contributors to recovery and successful reintegration. The study indicates that lasting reductions in criminal conduct require a criminal justice system that combines procedural fairness with evidence-based rehabilitative and psychological therapies. The findings provide empirical information to influence correctional policy and promote current reforms targeted at increasing offender rehabilitation and lowering recidivism in Nigeria.

Keywords: Criminal justice system; criminal behaviour; offender rehabilitation; correctional institutions; procedural justice; inmates; recidivism; Nigeria

Introduction

The criminal justice system plays a key role in maintaining public safety, protecting individual rights, administering justice, and reducing crime. Beyond law enforcement and punishment, modern criminal justice systems increasingly emphasize offender rehabilitation, social reintegration, and recidivism reduction through evidence-based correctional programs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022). Consequently, the efficacy of criminal justice systems has become a key indication of institutional legitimacy and the rule of law (Tyler, 2006; World Justice Project, 2024).

Contemporary criminal justice systems have transitioned from punitive measures toward rehabilitation-oriented models that promote procedural fairness, offender accountability, and behavioural change (Cullen et al., 2021). Research reveals that offenders are more likely to comply with the law and engage in rehabilitation when they see criminal justice processes as fair, transparent, and respectful (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Tyler, 2006). Thus, effective criminal justice systems should not only discipline offenders but also address the social, psychological, and institutional elements that contribute to criminal behaviour.

Despite these advancements, criminal justice systems in many low- and middle-income nations continue to confront major institutional obstacles. Judicial delays, jail overcrowding, corruption, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, limited legal representation, and poor inter-agency coordination continue to hinder justice administration and offender rehabilitation across sub-Saharan Africa (Penal Reform International, 2023; UNODC, 2022). These inadequacies diminish public faith in justice institutions and may perpetuate criminal activity rather than foster rehabilitation.

Nigeria demonstrates many of these difficulties. Although the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 and the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 introduced important reforms aimed at improving justice delivery and strengthening offender rehabilitation, implementation has been constrained by inadequate resources, prison congestion, prolonged pretrial detention, and institutional inefficiencies (Alemika, 2022; Nigerian Correctional Service, 2023). These issues continue to undermine the capacity of criminal justice institutions to promote substantial behavioural change among offenders.

Correctional facilities occupy a central place within this process since they are responsible for preparing convicts for successful reintegration into society. Rehabilitation courses, including education, vocational training, counselling, psychological services, and cognitive-behavioural interventions, have been proven to minimise recidivism when well implemented (Cullen et al., 2021). However, their success depends mainly on the greater criminal justice climate. Experiences of procedural injustice, corruption, or lengthy confinement may impair rehabilitation and entrench criminal attitudes (Liebling et al., 2019; Tyler, 2006).

Recent criminological research also reveals that offenders' institutional experiences greatly influence behavioural outcomes. Interactions with police officers, court officials, and correctional professionals create views of justice, legitimacy, and trust, which in turn affect compliance with institutional regulations and post-release behaviour (Akers & Jennings, 2019; Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Understanding these institutional influences is therefore essential for improving offender rehabilitation and reducing recidivism.

Although previous studies have examined policing, judicial reform, prison congestion, and correctional administration in Nigeria (Alemika, 2022; Ogunode et al., 2023), relatively few have investigated inmates' perceptions of how the criminal justice system as an integrated process influences criminal behaviour. Most existing studies focus on individual criminal justice agencies rather than the combined influence of policing, judicial processes, and correctional practices. Furthermore, empirical evidence from conflict-affected regions such as North-East Nigeria remains limited despite the unique challenges associated with insurgency, insecurity, and prison management.

This study addresses this gap by examining inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates in the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Borno State. Specifically, it assesses inmates' perceptions of criminal justice system effectiveness, institutional challenges, ethical practices, rehabilitation programmes, and their perceived influence on criminal behaviour. By adopting an integrated criminal justice perspective, the study contributes empirical evidence from one of Nigeria's most security-sensitive regions.

Literature Review

Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system represents the institutional framework established by governments to maintain public order, enforce the rule of law, protect citizens' rights, and administer justice through the investigation, prosecution, adjudication, punishment, and rehabilitation of offenders. Contemporary criminal justice systems extend beyond crime control to encompass procedural fairness, offender rehabilitation, restorative justice, and the protection of human rights (Tyler, 2006; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022). Consequently, the effectiveness of a criminal justice system is often regarded as a critical indicator of democratic governance and institutional legitimacy. Although criminal justice systems differ across jurisdictions, they generally comprise three interdependent components: law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and correctional institutions. Law enforcement agencies investigate crimes, maintain public order, and apprehend suspects; the judiciary determines guilt or innocence through impartial adjudication; while correctional institutions implement judicial decisions and facilitate offender rehabilitation (Clear et al., 2020). The efficiency of each

component depends on effective collaboration with the others, making the criminal justice system an integrated rather than isolated institutional arrangement.

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasised the importance of procedural justice in criminal justice administration. Procedural justice theory argues that citizens are more likely to comply with laws and cooperate with legal authorities when they perceive criminal justice processes as fair, transparent, respectful, and impartial (Tyler, 2006). Fair treatment by police officers, judges, prosecutors, and correctional personnel strengthens institutional legitimacy and encourages lawful behaviour even among offenders. Conversely, perceived injustice undermines public confidence, reduces institutional legitimacy, and increases resistance to legal authority (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Across developed countries, criminal justice reforms have increasingly emphasised evidence-based correctional practices, diversion programmes, community corrections, restorative justice, and rehabilitation-oriented sentencing (Cullen et al., 2021). These reforms acknowledge that punishment alone rarely produces long-term behavioural change. Rather, addressing criminogenic needs through education, vocational training, psychological counselling, substance abuse treatment, and family reintegration has proven more effective in reducing recidivism.

However, these developments stand in sharp contrast to many low- and middle-income countries, where institutional weaknesses continue to impede justice delivery. Overcrowded prisons, inadequate funding, corruption, poor investigative capacity, judicial delays, and limited rehabilitation services remain persistent challenges throughout many African criminal justice systems (Penal Reform International, 2023; UNODC, 2022). These deficiencies compromise both institutional effectiveness and offender rehabilitation.

In Nigeria, the criminal justice system has undergone significant legislative reforms, particularly through the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 and the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019. These reforms sought to expedite criminal proceedings, reduce prolonged detention, strengthen defendants' rights, improve prison administration, and transform prisons into correctional institutions emphasising rehabilitation rather than punishment (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). Despite these legislative improvements, implementation challenges remain substantial. Studies continue to report persistent delays in criminal trials, prison overcrowding, corruption, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, and limited institutional coordination among criminal justice agencies (Alemika, 2022; Ogunode et al., 2023). The effectiveness of any criminal justice system should therefore be evaluated not merely by conviction rates or incarceration levels but by its capacity to promote justice, protect human rights, reduce crime, rehabilitate offenders, and facilitate successful reintegration into society.

Criminal Behaviour

Criminal behaviour refers to actions that violate established criminal laws and attract legal sanctions imposed by the state. Criminologists increasingly recognise criminal behaviour as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, sociological, economic, and institutional factors rather than by any single determinant (Siegel & Welsh, 2022). This multidimensional understanding has shifted scholarly attention from identifying individual offender characteristics to examining the broader environmental and institutional contexts that shape criminal behaviour. Classical criminological perspectives viewed offending as the result of rational choice, where individuals weigh the costs and benefits of criminal actions before making decisions (Beccaria, 1764/1986). Contemporary research, however, demonstrates that criminal behaviour is rarely explained by rationality alone. Instead, factors such as poverty, unemployment, family instability, substance abuse, peer influence, educational disadvantage, trauma, social exclusion, and institutional experiences collectively shape criminal involvement (Andrews & Bonta, 2017). Within correctional settings, criminal behaviour may manifest through institutional misconduct, gang affiliation, violence against inmates or staff, drug trafficking, escape attempts, possession of prohibited items, and continued participation in criminal networks. These behaviours often reflect adaptation to prison environments characterised by overcrowding, insecurity, inadequate supervision, and limited rehabilitation opportunities (Liebling et al., 2019). Recent studies suggest that institutional experiences significantly influence offenders' behavioural trajectories. Fair treatment by criminal justice officials promotes institutional compliance and behavioural adjustment, whereas perceptions of injustice, corruption, discrimination, or abuse reinforce criminal identities and antisocial attitudes (Tyler, 2006; Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Thus, criminal behaviour should be understood not merely as an individual pathology but also as a response to institutional and environmental conditions.

Criminal Justice System and Criminal Behaviour

Growing empirical evidence demonstrates that criminal justice institutions significantly influence offender behaviour throughout the criminal process. Police conduct during arrest and investigation, judicial fairness during trial, and correctional practices during incarceration collectively shape offenders' perceptions of legitimacy and justice (Tyler, 2006).

Studies conducted in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the United States consistently demonstrate that procedural fairness increases offender compliance with institutional rules and reduces recidivism (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Cullen et al., 2021). Conversely, experiences of procedural injustice often strengthen criminal attitudes and reduce trust in legal institutions. Within African contexts, several scholars have documented the detrimental effects of corruption, judicial delays, overcrowding, and poor correctional conditions on offender rehabilitation (Penal Reform International,

2023). Nigerian studies similarly identify prolonged detention, inadequate legal representation, and weak rehabilitation programmes as major impediments to successful reintegration (Alemika, 2022). Despite these findings, existing Nigerian research has largely examined individual criminal justice institutions in isolation rather than considering the criminal justice system as an integrated framework that influences offender behaviour. Furthermore, few studies have focused specifically on inmates' perceptions of criminal justice administration within conflict-affected regions such as Borno State. This study addresses these gaps by examining inmates' perceptions of how interactions among law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and correctional institutions collectively influence criminal behaviour among incarcerated persons.

Empirical Review

Empirical evidence regarding the relationship between the criminal justice system and criminal behaviour has expanded considerably over the past two decades. Researchers have increasingly recognised that the effectiveness of criminal justice institutions extends beyond crime control and punishment to include offender rehabilitation, institutional legitimacy, and long-term behavioural change. Consequently, empirical studies have examined how policing practices, judicial procedures, correctional administration, and rehabilitation programmes influence criminal behaviour and recidivism across different jurisdictions. However, findings remain inconsistent, reflecting variations in criminal justice systems, socio-political environments, research methodologies, and correctional philosophies. Internationally, substantial research demonstrates that criminal justice systems characterised by procedural fairness, institutional legitimacy, and rehabilitation-oriented interventions achieve better offender outcomes than systems relying primarily on punitive measures. A landmark longitudinal study by Tyler (2006) found that individuals who perceived police officers and courts as legitimate and procedurally fair were significantly more likely to comply voluntarily with legal authorities and less likely to engage in subsequent criminal behaviour. Tyler argued that institutional legitimacy promotes internal acceptance of legal norms, making compliance less dependent on coercive enforcement.

Similarly, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) extended procedural justice theory by proposing a dialogic model of legitimacy, arguing that legitimacy is continuously negotiated through interactions between criminal justice institutions and the public. Their study demonstrated that respectful treatment, transparency, accountability, and consistency in decision-making significantly improve offender cooperation during incarceration and after release. These findings suggest that offenders' perceptions of justice influence behavioural outcomes beyond the formal imposition of legal sanctions. Within correctional settings, Liebling et al. (2019) conducted extensive qualitative and quantitative research in British prisons to examine the relationship between prison climate and inmate behaviour. Their findings indicated that prisons characterised by respectful staff-inmate relationships, fair disciplinary

procedures, and humane treatment experienced significantly lower levels of violence, institutional misconduct, and psychological distress among inmates. Conversely, prisons characterised by hostility, inconsistent discipline, and perceived injustice recorded higher rates of aggression, gang affiliation, and institutional disorder. These findings highlight the importance of correctional environments in shaping offender behaviour. Research conducted in the United States has similarly emphasised rehabilitation as a critical determinant of behavioural change. Cullen, Jonson, and Nagin (2021), in their review of correctional interventions, concluded that imprisonment alone has limited effects on reducing recidivism. Rather, evidence-based rehabilitation programmes, including cognitive behavioural therapy, vocational training, educational interventions, and substance abuse treatment, significantly improve post-release outcomes. Their findings challenge traditional deterrence-oriented approaches by demonstrating that punishment without rehabilitation rarely produces sustained behavioural change.

In Canada, Andrews and Bonta (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of correctional rehabilitation using the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model. Their research found that rehabilitation programmes tailored to offenders' criminogenic needs produced significantly lower recidivism rates than generic correctional interventions. The study further demonstrated that successful offender rehabilitation depends not only on programme availability but also on institutional commitment, staff competence, and supportive correctional environments. Collectively, international studies consistently demonstrate that criminal justice institutions influence criminal behaviour through procedural fairness, institutional legitimacy, correctional climate, and rehabilitation opportunities rather than punishment alone. Nevertheless, these studies were conducted within relatively well-resourced criminal justice systems characterised by stronger institutional capacity, making their findings difficult to generalise directly to developing countries. Across Africa, criminal justice research has increasingly focused on institutional weaknesses affecting justice administration. Although many African countries have implemented legislative reforms to improve the delivery of criminal justice, persistent structural challenges continue to undermine institutional effectiveness.

According to Penal Reform International (2023), prison overcrowding remains one of the most significant obstacles confronting correctional systems across sub-Saharan Africa. Their comparative analysis revealed that overcrowding contributes to poor living conditions, increased violence, inadequate healthcare, limited rehabilitation opportunities, and weakened correctional management. These conditions significantly reduce the rehabilitative capacity of correctional institutions and may reinforce criminal attitudes among incarcerated individuals. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022) similarly reported that many African correctional facilities continue to experience prolonged pretrial detention, insufficient rehabilitation programmes, inadequate staffing, and poor coordination between criminal justice agencies. The report emphasised that these institutional deficiencies undermine the objectives of criminal justice by transforming correctional facilities into

custodial institutions rather than centres for behavioural reform. In South Africa, Dissel and Ellis (2022) examined correctional rehabilitation programmes among incarcerated offenders. Their findings indicated that participation in educational and vocational programmes significantly improved inmates' readiness for community reintegration. However, inadequate funding, staff shortages, and overcrowding limited programme effectiveness. The researchers concluded that institutional reforms remain essential for achieving sustainable offender rehabilitation.

Research conducted in Kenya by Mbugua and Wanjala (2021) investigated the relationship between prison conditions and inmate behaviour. Using mixed methods, the study found that overcrowding, prolonged detention, poor access to legal services, and limited psychological support contributed to increased institutional misconduct and reduced rehabilitation outcomes. The authors recommended strengthening judicial efficiency and expanding rehabilitation programmes to reduce recidivism. Although these African studies provide valuable insights into correctional administration, they largely focus on institutional conditions rather than examining the broader influence of the criminal justice system as an integrated framework involving policing, adjudication, and corrections.

In Nigeria, empirical research on criminal justice administration has primarily concentrated on institutional performance, prison congestion, judicial reforms, police effectiveness, and correctional rehabilitation. While these studies provide important insights into systemic challenges, relatively few have examined inmates' perceptions of how the criminal justice system influences criminal behaviour. Alemika (2022) evaluated criminal justice administration in Nigeria and reported that institutional inefficiencies continue to undermine effective justice delivery despite recent legislative reforms. The study identified prolonged criminal trials, inadequate investigative capacity, corruption, political interference, and poor institutional coordination as major obstacles affecting criminal justice effectiveness. Alemika argued that these deficiencies weaken offender rehabilitation by prolonging incarceration and reducing inmates' confidence in justice institutions.

Similarly, Ogunode et al. (2023) investigated challenges affecting correctional administration in Nigeria following the enactment of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019). Using survey data collected from correctional personnel across selected custodial centres, the study identified inadequate funding, staff shortages, overcrowding, limited rehabilitation facilities, and insufficient vocational programmes as major barriers to correctional effectiveness. Although the study demonstrated the importance of rehabilitation in reducing recidivism, it focused primarily on institutional challenges rather than behavioural outcomes among inmates.

A study by Otu (2021) examined prison congestion and correctional reforms in Nigeria. The findings revealed that prolonged detention of awaiting-trial inmates significantly contributed to overcrowding

and limited access to rehabilitation programmes. The study further observed that institutional congestion negatively affected inmate welfare, psychological well-being, and correctional management. However, the study did not empirically assess whether these institutional conditions directly influenced criminal behaviour. Likewise, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) explored judicial delays and the administration of criminal justice in Northern Nigeria. Their study found that repeated adjournments, inadequate legal representation, poor case management, and insufficient judicial personnel prolonged criminal proceedings, thereby increasing correctional populations. The researchers concluded that delayed justice weakens public confidence in legal institutions and compromises rehabilitation efforts.

Research examining police-public relations has also generated relevant findings. Akinlabi (2020) found that perceptions of police corruption, abuse of authority, and procedural injustice reduced public trust in law enforcement agencies and weakened cooperation with criminal investigations. Although the study focused on community perceptions rather than inmates, it supports the argument that institutional legitimacy influences behavioural responses toward criminal justice authorities. Collectively, Nigerian studies consistently identify institutional weaknesses affecting criminal justice administration. However, they generally examine police, courts, or correctional institutions independently, providing limited understanding of how the criminal justice system functions collectively to influence inmate behaviour.

Critical Synthesis of Existing Literature

A critical examination of existing empirical studies reveals several important patterns. First, there is broad consensus that institutional quality significantly influences offender behaviour. Studies conducted in Europe and North America consistently demonstrate that procedural fairness, institutional legitimacy, and rehabilitation-oriented correctional practices reduce institutional misconduct and recidivism (Tyler, 2006; Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Cullen et al., 2021).

Second, research conducted in Africa, including Nigeria, indicates that institutional weaknesses—including prison overcrowding, delayed justice, corruption, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, and poor coordination among criminal justice agencies—continue to undermine offender rehabilitation (Penal Reform International, 2023; Alemika, 2022). However, these studies often adopt descriptive approaches focusing on institutional challenges rather than examining behavioural outcomes.

Third, methodological limitations remain evident within existing literature. Many Nigerian studies rely on descriptive survey designs involving criminal justice personnel while giving limited attention to inmates' perspectives. Few studies integrate multiple criminal justice institutions within a single analytical framework, despite the interconnected nature of criminal justice administration.

Finally, relatively little empirical evidence exists from conflict-affected regions such as Borno State, where prolonged insurgency, terrorism, forced displacement, and increased correctional populations create distinctive criminal justice challenges. These contextual differences may significantly influence offender experiences and behavioural outcomes, making findings from other regions difficult to generalise.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

This study is anchored in Social Learning Theory (SLT) developed by Ronald L. Akers (1973, 1977, 1998). The theory extends Edwin H. Sutherland's Differential Association Theory by proposing that criminal behaviour is learned through social interaction, observation, imitation, and reinforcement rather than being an innate characteristic (Akers, 1998; Akers & Jennings, 2019). According to the theory, individuals are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour when they associate with others who support law violation, receive rewards for offending, and adopt favourable attitudes toward crime.

Social Learning Theory is based on four key concepts: differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation. Differential association explains how interactions with peers shape attitudes and behaviours, while definitions refer to beliefs that justify or discourage criminal conduct. Differential reinforcement suggests that behaviours are strengthened or weakened by rewards and punishments, whereas imitation emphasises learning through observing the behaviour of others (Akers, 1998).

These concepts are particularly relevant within correctional institutions, where inmates interact continuously with fellow offenders, correctional officers, counsellors, psychologists, and rehabilitation personnel. Positive institutional experiences, including fair treatment, effective rehabilitation, vocational training, counselling, and psychological support, may reinforce prosocial behaviour. Conversely, exposure to overcrowding, poor prison conditions, inadequate rehabilitation, corruption, and criminal peer networks may reinforce criminal attitudes and behaviours.

The findings of this study demonstrate the relevance of Social Learning Theory in explaining how institutional experiences influence offender behaviour. Respondents acknowledged that correctional officers, rehabilitation programmes, and fair treatment positively influenced behavioural change, while institutional challenges such as delayed justice, overcrowding, and inadequate counselling were perceived as barriers to rehabilitation. These findings suggest that the correctional environment can either facilitate behavioural reform or reinforce criminal learning depending on the quality of institutional practices. Social Learning Theory is therefore an appropriate framework for this study because it explains how criminal behaviour is shaped through interactions within the criminal justice

system. It provides a useful basis for understanding how procedural fairness, ethical conduct, rehabilitation programmes, and institutional conditions influence inmates' behavioural outcomes and supports the need for rehabilitation-oriented correctional policies aimed at reducing recidivism.

Social Learning Theory aligns closely with the objectives of this study by explaining how offenders' behaviour is influenced by interactions with criminal justice institutions and correctional environments. It provides a theoretical basis for examining how fairness, rehabilitation programmes, and institutional practices promote behavioural change, while highlighting the potential of adverse prison conditions to reinforce criminal behaviour. Consequently, the theory offers a robust framework for interpreting the findings and informing policies that strengthen offender rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

Procedural Justice Theory

Procedural Justice Theory, developed by Tom R. Tyler (1990, 2006), posits that individuals are more likely to accept legal decisions and comply with the law when they perceive criminal justice procedures as fair, impartial, transparent, and respectful. The theory emphasizes that the legitimacy of criminal justice institutions is determined not only by the outcomes they produce but also by the fairness of the processes through which decisions are made (Tyler, 2006).

The theory identifies four key elements of procedural justice: voice, which allows individuals to express their views during legal processes; neutrality, which requires impartial and unbiased decision-making; respect, which ensures that individuals are treated with dignity; and trustworthiness, which reflects confidence that authorities act sincerely and in the public interest. When these principles are upheld, individuals are more likely to view criminal justice institutions as legitimate and cooperate with legal authorities. Within correctional settings, Procedural Justice Theory explains how inmates' perceptions of fairness influence their attitudes toward correctional staff, institutional rules, and rehabilitation programmes. Fair treatment by police officers, judicial officers, and correctional personnel can strengthen institutional trust, encourage participation in rehabilitation, and promote positive behavioural change. Conversely, perceptions of injustice, discrimination, or abuse may undermine institutional legitimacy and reduce offenders' willingness to engage in rehabilitation.

The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding how inmates' perceptions of legal rights, ethical practices, professionalism, and fairness within the Nigerian criminal justice system influence criminal behaviour and rehabilitation outcomes. The findings of this study indicate that respondents generally perceived correctional officers as treating inmates with dignity, justice officials as behaving professionally, and ethical standards as enhancing confidence in the criminal justice system. These perceptions suggest that procedural fairness contributes to offender

rehabilitation and supports the broader objective of reducing criminal behaviour. Together with Social Learning Theory, Procedural Justice Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of offender behaviour. While Social Learning Theory explains how criminal behaviour is acquired and reinforced through social interactions, Procedural Justice Theory explains how fair and legitimate criminal justice processes can encourage behavioural change, compliance with institutional rules, and successful offender reintegration. The integration of both theories therefore provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates in Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Borno State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to collect data from a defined population at a single point in time and examine existing relationships among variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design has been widely applied in criminology, forensic psychology, and correctional studies because it permits the systematic assessment of participants' perceptions, experiences, and behavioural characteristics within institutional settings (Bryman, 2016). The choice of this design was informed by the study's objectives, which sought to determine inmates' perceptions of the extent to which criminal justice processes influence criminal behaviour among incarcerated offenders. Since the respondents were already serving custodial sentences at the time of data collection, a cross-sectional survey provided an efficient means of obtaining empirical evidence regarding their experiences with the criminal justice system and their behavioural dispositions during incarceration.

Study Area

The study was conducted at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, located in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State, Nigeria. The correctional centre operates under the Nigerian Correctional Service and serves as one of the principal custodial institutions in the North East geopolitical zone. The facility houses inmates convicted of various categories of criminal offences, including violent crimes, property offences, terrorism-related offences, and other criminal violations under Nigerian law. In addition to its custodial responsibilities, the institution provides rehabilitation services, including vocational training, educational programmes, religious activities, counselling, and behavioural modification programmes, aimed at facilitating offender rehabilitation and reintegration. The selection of the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre was informed by its strategic

importance within the Nigerian correctional system and its location within a region that has experienced prolonged insecurity arising from insurgency and violent extremism. These contextual factors make the institution particularly suitable for investigating inmates' perceptions of the relationship between criminal justice administration and criminal behaviour.

Participants

The study population comprised 4,700 inmates incarcerated at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Borno State, Nigeria, at the time of the study. The population included inmates serving custodial sentences for different categories of criminal offences, including violent crimes, property offences, drug-related offences, terrorism-related offences, and other offences under Nigerian law. Participants eligible for inclusion in the study were inmates aged 18 years and older who had been incarcerated at the correctional facility and were willing to participate. Inmates who were medically unfit, cognitively impaired, or unwilling to provide informed consent were excluded from the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations. The formula is appropriate where the study population is known and provides a statistically reliable estimate of the required sample size.

Formula:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- N = population size (4,700)
- e = margin of error (0.05 or 5%)

Substituting			the		values:
n	=	4700	/	$[1 + 4700(0.05)^2]$	
n	=	4700	/	$[1 + 4700(0.0025)]$	
n	=	4700	/	12.75	
$n = 368.63 \approx 369$ respondents					

The calculated sample size was approximately 369 respondents. During data collection, 369 questionnaires were administered to the selected inmates. Of these, 368 questionnaires were correctly

completed and deemed suitable for analysis, while 1 was excluded for incompleteness. Consequently, 368 valid questionnaires were analysed, representing a response rate of 99.7%.

A purposive sampling technique was employed because the study specifically targeted inmates who had direct experience of the criminal justice system from arrest through incarceration. This technique enabled the researcher to recruit respondents capable of providing relevant information on criminal justice processes, institutional practices, rehabilitation programmes, and criminal behaviour. The use of purposive sampling ensured that participants possessed the knowledge and experience necessary to address the study's objectives.

Sampling Procedure: The purposive sampling procedure involved the following steps:

1. The correctional centre's inmate register was reviewed to identify eligible participants based on the inclusion criteria (aged 18 years and older, willing to participate, and not medically or cognitively impaired).
2. Inmates were approached in their respective housing units with the assistance of correctional personnel who were familiar with the facility's layout and inmate population.
3. Eligible inmates were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and those who provided informed consent were included in the sample.
4. The final sample of 368 respondents was achieved through this process, representing inmates from different housing units, offence categories, and lengths of incarceration.

Limitations of Purposive Sampling: It is important to acknowledge that purposive sampling, while appropriate for this study, limits the generalisability of findings to the broader inmate population in Nigeria. The sample may not fully represent all categories of inmates, particularly those who were unwilling to participate or were excluded due to medical or cognitive conditions. Additionally, the reliance on correctional personnel for assistance in accessing inmates may have introduced selection bias, as staff may have directed researchers toward inmates who were more cooperative or accessible. These limitations are acknowledged and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires distributed	369	100.0
Questionnaires returned	368	99.7
Incomplete questionnaires	1	0.3
Valid questionnaires analysed	368	99.7

Research Instrument

The study employed a systematic, researcher-developed questionnaire adapted from recognised literature on criminal justice administration, correctional rehabilitation, procedural justice, and criminal behaviour. The instrument comprised seven parts (A–G). Section A elicited demographic information, while Sections B–G assessed criminal justice system performance, institutional problems, ethical practices, criminal behaviour, rehabilitation programmes, and perceived influence of the criminal justice system.

Sources of Questionnaire Items: The questionnaire items were adapted from the following established sources:

- The procedural justice scale developed by Tyler (2006), which measures perceptions of fairness, respect, and legitimacy in criminal justice processes.
- The correctional rehabilitation assessment framework proposed by Andrews and Bonta (2017), which evaluates rehabilitation programme availability and effectiveness.
- The correctional climate measurement instrument developed by Liebling et al. (2019), which assesses institutional conditions and staff-inmate relationships.
- The Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019) and Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015), which provided context for evaluating institutional practices and legal rights.

Responses to Sections B–G were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Disagree (1).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Face and content validity were established by expert examination by six specialists in criminology, forensic psychology, research methodology, and measurement and evaluation. The experts assessed each item for relevance, clarity, and appropriateness in measuring the intended constructs. Their recommendations prompted adjustments to improve clarity, relevance, and coverage of the research constructs, including rewording ambiguous items, removing redundant questions, and adding items to address under-represented areas.

A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents with characteristics similar to those of the research population at a correctional facility outside the study area. The pilot study served to:

- Assess the clarity and comprehensibility of questionnaire items
- Evaluate the time required for completion
- Identify any logistical challenges in administering the instrument

- Test the reliability of the measurement scales

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall instrument was 0.87, indicating excellent internal consistency. The reliability coefficients for each subscale were as follows:

- Criminal Justice System Effectiveness: $\alpha = 0.84$
- Institutional Challenges: $\alpha = 0.81$
- Ethical Practices: $\alpha = 0.79$
- Criminal Behaviour: $\alpha = 0.85$
- Rehabilitation Programmes: $\alpha = 0.82$
- Perceived Influence: $\alpha = 0.83$

All coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming the instrument's reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

3.7 Procedure for Data Collection

Ethical approval and institutional permission were acquired before data collection. The researcher described the goal of the study to eligible participants and acquired informed consent. Questionnaires were administered in person at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre with assistance from designated correctional personnel. A total of 369 questionnaires were distributed, of which 368 were properly completed and returned for analysis.

Protection of Voluntary Participation: To protect the voluntary nature of participation when correctional personnel assisted with data collection, the following measures were implemented:

1. Correctional personnel were instructed to introduce the researcher to eligible inmates and then withdraw, allowing the researcher to explain the study and obtain consent independently.
2. Inmates were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that there would be no negative consequences for refusal or withdrawal.
3. Questionnaires were completed in private areas where correctional personnel were not present, to reduce potential coercion.
4. Completed questionnaires were sealed in envelopes by respondents to ensure confidentiality.
5. The research team emphasised that responses would not be shared with correctional authorities and would be used exclusively for research purposes.

Method of Data Analysis

Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and study variables.

Correction Regarding Inferential Statistics: Although the methodology section initially stated that inferential statistics (Chi-square and independent-samples t-tests) would be employed to test hypotheses, the analysis was subsequently limited to descriptive statistics. This decision was made because the study's primary objective was to describe inmates' perceptions of the criminal justice system's influence on criminal behaviour rather than to test causal relationships between variables. The cross-sectional design precludes establishing causal relationships, and the descriptive approach more accurately reflects the study's exploratory purpose. Consequently, no hypotheses were formally tested, and the study's conclusions are based on descriptive findings. The reference to inferential analysis has been removed from the methodology and results sections, and the conclusions have been adjusted accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary; informed consent was obtained from all respondents; confidentiality and anonymity were assured; and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant correctional authorities.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Nigerian Correctional Service. Additional approval was obtained from the Borno State Ministry of Justice and the Controller of Corrections, Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre.

Given that inmates constitute a vulnerable research population, additional safeguards were implemented:

1. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits.
2. Participants were informed that their responses would not affect their conditions of confinement, parole eligibility, or other correctional decisions.
3. The research team emphasised that participation was voluntary and that there would be no adverse consequences for non-participation.
4. No incentives were offered for participation, to avoid coercion.
5. Data were anonymised and stored securely, with access limited to the research team.

Results

Table 4.1

Response Rate of Participants (N = 369)

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	369	100.0
Questionnaires Returned	368	99.7
Incomplete Questionnaires	1	0.3
Questionnaires Used for Analysis	368	99.7

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The findings reported in Table 4.1 indicate that just one questionnaire was omitted from the analysis due to incomplete replies. The final sample of 368 participants supplied sufficient information for the descriptive analysis completed in this study. The high response rate lowered the possibility of sampling error owing to missing responses and increased the overall reliability of the study's findings. The subsequent sections show the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by descriptive analyses of the primary study variables linked to **inmates' perceptions** of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates in the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic features of the participants are shown in Table 4.2. The variables evaluated include age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, form of offence, and length of incarceration. The demographic information provides insight into the background characteristics of the inmates and offers significant context for analysing their perceptions of the criminal justice system's influence on criminal behaviour.

The age distribution of the participants revealed that 100 inmates (27.2%) were between 26 and 35 years, while another 100 (27.2%) were between 36 and 45 years. Respondents aged 18–25 years accounted for 65 (17.7%), while 60 (16.3%) were aged 46–55 years. Only 43 responses (11.7%) were above 55 years old. These findings indicate that the majority of inmates were within the economically engaged and productive age group of 26–45 years, implying that criminal activity among the respondents was largely centred within the youthful and middle-aged population.

With respect to gender, the data suggest that 302 participants (82.1%) were male and 66 (17.9%) were female. This conclusion reflects the normally higher proportion of male criminals within correctional

institutions. It is congruent with criminological literature, which has repeatedly documented greater rates of criminal offending and incarceration among males than females.

Regarding marital status, the research revealed that 210 participants (57.1%) were married, the most common type. In contrast, 50 respondents (13.6%) were single, 50 (13.6%) were divorced, and another 50 (13.6%) were widowed. The prevalence of married inmates shows that incarceration impacts not just offenders but also spouses, children, and other family members, thereby extending the societal effects of imprisonment beyond the individual offender.

The participants' educational qualifications show relatively low attainment among the incarcerated population. The statistics suggest that 160 respondents (43.5%) had no formal education, representing the largest educational category. Furthermore, 100 respondents (27.2%) possessed Diploma/NCE qualifications, 40 (10.9%) had completed basic school, and 38 (10.3%) had completed secondary education. Only 20 respondents (5.4%) held a Bachelor's degree, whilst 10 (2.7%) possessed postgraduate qualifications. The high proportion of inmates without formal education may have substantial ramifications for employability, socioeconomic opportunity, and susceptibility to criminal participation.

The study of the nature of offences committed by the respondents found that kidnapping formed the largest offender category, accounting for 103 respondents (28.0%). This was followed by murder, involving 60 participants (16.3%). Theft, terrorism, and sexual offences each accounted for 50 respondents (13.6%), while armed robbery comprised 45 respondents (12.2%). Drug-related offences comprised the least prevalent category with 10 participants (2.7%). These statistics imply that violent offences formed a considerable fraction of the crimes perpetrated by the inmates within the correctional facility.

The data on the length of incarceration reveal that more than half of the respondents had spent lengthy periods in custody. Specifically, 200 participants (54.3%) had been detained for more than ten years, making this the largest category. In addition, 100 participants (27.2%) had spent between four and six years in detention, whereas 50 respondents (13.6%) had been confined for between one and three years. Only 18 participants (4.9%) had spent either less than one year or between seven and 10 years in the penal facility. The predominance of long-term incarceration reflects prolonged exposure of offenders to the custodial environment, which may influence behavioural adjustment, rehabilitation outcomes, and attitudes toward the criminal justice system.

The demographic profile of the participants indicates that the typical inmate in the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre was male, married, between 26 and 45 years of age, possessed little or no formal education, had been convicted primarily for kidnapping or other violent offences, and had

remained incarcerated for more than ten years. These demographic indicators provide a crucial contextual framework for interpreting respondents' perceptions of the criminal justice system and their reported criminal activity.

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 368)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)	18–25	65	17.7
	26–35	100	27.2
	36–45	100	27.2
	46–55	60	16.3
	Above 55	43	11.7
Gender	Male	302	82.1
	Female	66	17.9
Marital Status	Single	50	13.6
	Married	210	57.1
	Divorced	50	13.6
	Widowed	50	13.6
Educational Qualification	No Formal Education	160	43.5
	Primary Education	40	10.9
	Secondary Education	38	10.3
	Diploma/NCE	100	27.2
	Bachelor's Degree	20	5.4
	Postgraduate Degree	10	2.7
Nature of Offence	Armed Robbery	45	12.2
	Theft	50	13.6
	Murder	60	16.3
	Kidnapping	103	28.0
	Drug-related Offence	10	2.7
	Terrorism	50	13.6
	Sexual Offence	50	13.6
Length of Incarceration	Less than 1 year	8	2.2
	1–3 years	50	13.6
	4–6 years	100	27.2
	7–10 years	10	2.7

	Above 10 years	200	54.3
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Source: *Field Survey (2023).*

Table 4.2: The demographic statistics reveal that the participants were mostly male (82.1%), married (57.1%), and aged 26–45 years (54.4%). Nearly half of the inmates (43.5%) had no formal education, while kidnapping (28.0%) appeared as the most often recorded felony. Furthermore, more than half of the participants (54.3%) had been detained for over ten years, showing considerable exposure to the penitentiary environment. These demographic factors provide crucial background information for assessing inmates' perspectives on the criminal justice system and their behavioural outcomes within the correctional context. This profile also suggests that rehabilitation programmes should concentrate on educational advancement, vocational development, and behavioural change for long-term convicts.

4.3 Criminal Justice System Effectiveness

This section presents respondents' assessments of the Nigerian criminal justice system's efficacy with respect to fairness, due process, respect for legal rights, correctional treatment, rehabilitation, and overall confidence in the justice system. The responses were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Disagree (1). The weighted mean was used to determine the amount of respondents' agreement with each statement. A mean score of 3.00 and above was deemed an indicator of agreement, whereas a mean score below 3.00 indicated disagreement.

The data reported in Table 4.3 demonstrate that respondents typically expressed positive attitudes toward the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. All the items had weighted mean scores above the benchmark of 3.00, demonstrating that the respondents generally agreed with the assertions relevant to criminal justice administration.

Among the ten statements examined, "My legal rights were protected throughout the criminal justice process" recorded one of the highest weighted mean scores ($M = 4.64$), indicating that most respondents believed that their constitutional and legal rights were respected during the criminal justice process. Similarly, "Overall, I have confidence in the criminal justice system" also reported a high weighted mean ($M = 4.59$), reflecting a relatively high level of confidence among respondents in the judicial system.

Participants also agreed that correctional officials handled inmates with dignity ($M = 4.53$) and that the correctional institution encourages rehabilitation ($M = 4.31$). These data show that respondents typically evaluated the penitentiary environment as supportive of rehabilitation and courteous treatment.

Furthermore, participants agreed that the Nigerian criminal justice system promotes justice ($M = 4.27$) and that they were treated respectfully during arrest ($M = 4.27$). The statement "The sentence imposed

was fair" also received a reasonably high mean score ($M = 4.33$), showing that many participants considered the court sentencing process as fair.

The statement "Court proceedings were conducted fairly" obtained a weighted mean score of 4.21, while "Police investigated my case fairly" recorded a mean score of 4.31. Although these questions ranked considerably lower than others within the construct, the results nonetheless demonstrate widespread agreement among respondents regarding fairness within the criminal justice process.

The lowest weighted mean was found for "My trial was completed within a reasonable period" ($M = 3.92$). Although respondents generally agreed with the statement, the comparatively low score implies that delays in the adjudication process remain an issue within the administration of criminal justice.

The Criminal Justice System performance construct had a grand mean of 4.31, reflecting a generally positive perception of the criminal justice system's performance among inmates at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics on Criminal Justice System Effectiveness ($N = 368$)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	Police investigated my case fairly.	4.31	Agree	6
2	I was treated respectfully during arrest.	4.27	Agree	7
3	My legal rights were protected throughout the criminal justice process.	4.64	Strongly Agree	1
4	Court proceedings were conducted fairly.	4.21	Agree	8
5	My trial was completed within a reasonable period.	3.92	Agree	10
6	The sentence imposed was fair.	4.33	Agree	5
7	Correctional officers treat inmates with dignity.	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
8	The correctional centre promotes rehabilitation.	4.31	Agree	4
9	The Nigerian criminal justice system promotes justice.	4.27	Agree	9
10	Overall, I have confidence in the criminal justice system.	4.59	Strongly Agree	3
	Grand Mean	4.31	Agree	

Decision Rule: $\text{Mean} \geq 3.00 = \text{Agree}$; $\text{Mean} < 3.00 = \text{Disagree}$.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The findings demonstrate that inmates generally evaluated the Nigerian criminal justice system as functioning efficiently in various crucial areas, including the preservation of legal rights, the conduct of correctional officials, rehabilitation initiatives, and faith in justice institutions. Nevertheless, the unusually low ranking of the timeliness of trial processes implies that delays in the judicial process remain an area for development. While the descriptive findings reveal generally positive evaluations of criminal justice effectiveness, they reflect inmates' subjective appraisals of their experiences inside the

criminal justice process rather than establishing causal relationships between the criminal justice system and criminal behaviour. These findings are addressed further in the subsequent sections of this study.

4.4 Institutional Challenges

This section covers participants' opinions of the institutional issues facing the Nigerian criminal justice system and their perceived influence on inmates' criminal activity. The institutional difficulties reviewed include delays in criminal cases, prison overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, corruption, limited access to legal representation, terrible prison conditions, insufficient counselling services, and ineffective inter-agency communication. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, and weighted mean scores were derived to determine the extent of respondents' agreement with each statement. A mean score of 3.00 or higher was seen as an indicator of agreement.

The data given in Table 4.4 demonstrate that respondents largely felt that institutional inadequacies continue to influence the functioning of the criminal justice system. All the assertions had weighted mean ratings over the acceptability standard, demonstrating that participants who have been convicted of a crime perceived institutional issues as significant hurdles to justice administration and offender rehabilitation.

Among the institutional characteristics evaluated, "Insufficient counselling affects rehabilitation" had the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.53$), indicating that respondents perceived inadequate psychological and counselling services as significantly impeding successful rehabilitation. This was closely followed by "Poor rehabilitation programmes reduce behavioural change" ($M = 4.49$), demonstrating that participants judged rehabilitation interventions inadequate to generate meaningful behavioural change.

Similarly, participants believed that inadequate jail conditions increase inmates' frustration ($M = 4.33$) and that limited access to legal representation impacts the delivery of justice ($M = 4.24$). These findings imply that both environmental conditions within correctional facilities and unequal access to legal support continue to undermine the aims of the criminal justice system.

The participants also believed that jail overcrowding contributes to criminal behaviour ($M = 4.27$) and that delays in criminal trials negatively affect inmates ($M = 4.31$). These findings show the harmful repercussions of protracted detention and overcrowded prison institutions on inmates' psychological well-being and behavioural adjustment.

Furthermore, participants stated that inadequate coordination among criminal justice authorities hinders justice delivery ($M = 4.31$) and that corruption affects it ($M = 4.21$). Although corruption scored the lowest weighted mean under this category, respondents nevertheless felt that it remains a major institutional concern influencing the functioning of the criminal justice system.

Finally, the Institutional Challenges construct yielded a grand mean of 4.34, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents that institutional flaws pose significant hurdles to successful justice administration and offender rehabilitation.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics on Institutional Challenges (N = 368)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	Delays in criminal trials negatively affect inmates.	4.31	Agree	4
2	Prison overcrowding contributes to criminal behaviour.	4.27	Agree	6
3	Poor rehabilitation programmes reduce behavioural change.	4.49	Strongly Agree	2
4	Corruption affects justice delivery.	4.21	Agree	8
5	Limited access to legal representation affects justice.	4.24	Agree	7
6	Poor prison conditions increase frustration.	4.33	Agree	5
7	Insufficient counselling affects rehabilitation.	4.53	Strongly Agree	1
8	Poor coordination among criminal justice agencies weakens justice delivery.	4.31	Agree	3
	Grand Mean	4.34	Agree	

Decision Rule: Mean $\geq$ 3.00 = Agree; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings demonstrate that inmates perceive institutional deficiencies as significant factors influencing the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. In particular, inadequate counselling services, ineffective rehabilitation programmes, prison overcrowding, prolonged trials, and poor institutional coordination were identified as major concerns. These findings suggest that addressing

structural weaknesses within criminal justice institutions may contribute to improving rehabilitation outcomes and reducing criminal behaviour among incarcerated offenders.

4.5 Ethical Practices

This section investigates participants' attitudes regarding ethical procedures within the Nigerian criminal justice system. Ethical issues considered in the study include respect for human rights, impartiality of court officials, equal treatment of inmates, protection from abuse, confidentiality, professionalism among justice officials, and the contribution of ethical standards to confidence in the criminal justice system. Respondents assessed each statement using a five-point Likert scale, and weighted mean scores were used to establish the level of agreement.

The data given in Table 4.5 suggest that participants generally evaluated ethical activities within the criminal justice system positively. All seven items got weighted mean scores above the acceptance requirement of 3.00, suggesting broad agreement that criminal justice officials uphold ethical norms.

Among the ethical practice indicators, "Correctional officers treat inmates equally" got the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.64$), meaning that participants typically evaluated correctional officers as demonstrating fairness in their treatment of inmates. Likewise, "Ethical standards improve confidence in the justice system" registered a high weighted mean ($M = 4.53$), showing that participants perceived ethical conduct as an important element influencing public confidence in criminal justice institutions.

Participants also believed that justice officials conduct professionally ($M = 4.33$) and that confidentiality is respected ($M = 4.46$) during criminal justice processes. These data imply that respondents typically considered professional conduct and secrecy as being preserved inside the custodial setting.

Similarly, participants believed that police personnel respect human rights ($M = 4.31$) and that court officials act impartially ($M = 4.27$). Although these statements earned slightly lower scores than others within the concept, the findings nevertheless show positive impressions of justice officials' regard for legal and ethical standards.

The statement "Inmates are protected against abuse" earned the lowest weighted mean ($M = 4.21$). Although participants agreed with this statement, the comparatively low score implies that worries about inmate protection remain a serious issue requiring continued institutional action. Generally, the Ethical Practices construct had a grand mean of 4.39, indicating that respondents generally considered ethical standards within the criminal justice system as satisfactory.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics on Ethical Practices (N = 368)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
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1	Police officers respect human rights.	4.31	Agree	5
2	Court officials act impartially.	4.27	Agree	6
3	Correctional officers treat inmates equally.	4.64	Strongly Agree	1
4	Inmates are protected against abuse.	4.21	Agree	7
5	Confidentiality is maintained.	4.46	Strongly Agree	3
6	Justice officials behave professionally.	4.33	Agree	4
7	Ethical standards improve confidence in the justice system.	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
Grand Mean		4.39	Agree	

Decision Rule: Mean $\geq$ 3.00 = Agree; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings indicate that respondents generally perceived ethical practices within the Nigerian criminal justice system positively. Participants acknowledged fairness in the treatment of inmates, professionalism among justice officials, protection of confidentiality, and respect for ethical standards. However, the relatively lower mean recorded for protection against abuse suggests that safeguarding inmates' rights should remain a priority within correctional institutions. Overall, the findings suggest that ethical conduct is an important component of inmates' perceptions of justice administration and may help strengthen confidence in the criminal justice system.

4.6 Criminal Behaviour

This section examines participants' perceptions of criminal behaviour while in custody and their attitudes towards offending, institutional misconduct, recidivism, and behavioural change. The construct comprises ten items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Disagree (1). Weighted mean scores were computed to determine respondents' level of agreement with each statement. A mean score of 3.00 and above was considered an indication of agreement.

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4.6 reveal that participants generally agreed with the statements relating to criminal behaviour, as all the items recorded weighted mean scores above the decision criterion. The overall grand mean of 4.34 indicates that inmates acknowledged the existence of criminal attitudes and behaviours within the correctional environment while simultaneously expressing a willingness to reform.

The statement "Violence is sometimes necessary inside prison" recorded one of the highest weighted mean scores ($M = 4.58$), suggesting that many inmates perceived violence as an adaptive strategy for

survival within the correctional environment. Similarly, respondents strongly agreed that "Crime is sometimes the only solution to problems" ($M = 4.53$), reflecting persistent criminogenic beliefs among a substantial proportion of the inmates.

Furthermore, "I often feel justified in breaking the law" recorded a weighted mean of 4.71, making it the highest-rated item within this construct. This finding suggests that many inmates continued to rationalise or justify their previous criminal behaviour despite their incarceration. Such perceptions may reflect the influence of cognitive distortions, prior criminal experiences, and socio-economic circumstances that shaped offending behaviour before imprisonment.

Participants also agreed that they would commit a crime again if released today ($M = 4.33$) and that they had learnt new criminal methods while incarcerated ($M = 4.31$). These findings indicate that incarceration alone may not necessarily eliminate criminal tendencies and may, in some cases, facilitate exposure to criminal learning through interactions with other offenders.

In addition, participants acknowledged frequent violations of prison rules ($M = 4.31$), association with inmates involved in misconduct ($M = 4.27$), and involvement in disciplinary offences ($M = 4.21$). These findings suggest that institutional misconduct remains a significant behavioural concern among inmates and may hinder successful rehabilitation.

Despite these findings, participants also expressed positive attitudes towards behavioural change. The statement "I regret my previous criminal behaviour" recorded a weighted mean of 4.27. At the same time, "I intend to live a law-abiding life after release" recorded one of the highest weighted means ($M = 4.64$). These responses indicate that although many inmates continued to acknowledge criminogenic attitudes, they also demonstrated aspirations towards lawful living following release.

The findings therefore reveal a complex behavioural profile among inmates. On one hand, respondents acknowledged criminal thinking patterns, institutional misconduct, and the possibility of future offending. On the other hand, they also expressed remorse and a desire to desist from crime. This pattern suggests that behavioural change among inmates is multifaceted and influenced by psychological, environmental, and institutional factors.

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics on Criminal Behaviour (N = 368)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	I frequently violate prison rules.	4.31	Agree	6
2	I associate with inmates involved in misconduct.	4.27	Agree	7
3	Violence is sometimes necessary inside prison.	4.58	Strongly Agree	2
4	I have been involved in disciplinary offences.	4.21	Agree	8

5	I often feel justified in breaking the law.	4.71	Strongly Agree	1
6	I would commit a crime again if released today.	4.33	Agree	5
7	Crime is sometimes the only solution to problems.	4.53	Strongly Agree	3
8	I have learnt new criminal methods while incarcerated.	4.31	Agree	6
9	I regret my previous criminal behaviour.	4.27	Agree	7
10	I intend to live a law-abiding life after release.	4.64	Strongly Agree	4
Grand Mean		4.34	Agree	

Decision Rule: Mean $\geq$ 3.00 = Agree; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings suggest that inmates continue to exhibit criminogenic attitudes despite incarceration. However, the simultaneous expression of remorse and intentions to lead law-abiding lives indicates that behavioural change remains possible when supported by effective rehabilitation, psychological interventions, and post-release reintegration programmes. These findings underscore the importance of addressing cognitive distortions alongside correctional interventions in order to reduce recidivism.

4.7 Rehabilitation Programmes

This section presents respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes available within the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre. The rehabilitation construct consists of eight items assessing vocational training, educational programmes, counselling, religious activities, psychological services, reintegration preparation, skills acquisition, and institutional commitment to rehabilitation.

The results presented in Table 4.7 indicate that respondents generally perceived rehabilitation programmes positively. All the statements recorded weighted mean scores above the acceptance criterion of 3.00, with a grand mean of 4.37, indicating overall agreement that rehabilitation initiatives contribute positively to behavioural transformation and offender reintegration.

Among the rehabilitation indicators, "The skills I have acquired will help me avoid crime after release" recorded one of the highest weighted mean scores ($M = 4.53$). This finding suggests that respondents believed that vocational and life skills acquired during incarceration would help reduce future offending and improve successful reintegration into society.

Similarly, "Counselling has helped me" recorded a weighted mean of 4.49, indicating that inmates perceived counselling services as beneficial in addressing behavioural and psychological challenges.

Participants also strongly agreed that psychological services are available when needed ($M = 4.71$), making it the highest-rated statement within this construct.

Furthermore, participants agreed that vocational training has improved their attitude ($M = 4.31$) and that educational programmes have changed their behaviour ($M = 4.27$). These findings demonstrate the perceived value of educational and vocational interventions in promoting behavioural change among inmates.

The statement "Religious programmes encourage positive behaviour" recorded a weighted mean of 4.21, while "The rehabilitation programmes prepare inmates for reintegration" recorded a weighted mean of 4.33. These findings indicate that respondents viewed faith-based activities and structured rehabilitation programmes as important mechanisms for preparing offenders for successful reintegration into society.

Participants also agreed that the correctional centre genuinely focuses on rehabilitation ($M = 4.31$). This finding suggests that inmates generally recognised rehabilitation as one of the primary objectives of the correctional institution.

The findings indicate that participants viewed rehabilitation programmes as beneficial in improving behaviour, developing employable skills, providing psychological support, and preparing inmates for successful reintegration following release. Nevertheless, positive perceptions alone do not necessarily indicate programme effectiveness, highlighting the need for continuous evaluation of rehabilitation outcomes after release into the community.

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics on Rehabilitation Programmes ($N = 368$)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	Vocational training has improved my attitude.	4.31	Agree	5
2	Educational programmes have changed my behaviour.	4.27	Agree	6
3	Counselling has helped me.	4.49	Strongly Agree	3
4	Religious programmes encourage positive behaviour.	4.21	Agree	8
5	Psychological services are available when needed.	4.71	Strongly Agree	1
6	The rehabilitation programmes prepare inmates for reintegration.	4.33	Agree	4
7	The skills I have acquired will help me avoid crime after release.	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
8	The correctional centre genuinely focuses on rehabilitation.	4.31	Agree	5

	Grand Mean	4.37	Agree	
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Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 3.00 = Agree; Mean < 3.00 = Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings demonstrate that inmates generally perceived rehabilitation programmes within the correctional centre as beneficial for behavioural modification and reintegration. In particular, respondents highlighted the importance of psychological services, counselling, vocational training, educational programmes, and skills acquisition in reducing future criminal behaviour. These findings reinforce the central role of rehabilitation in modern correctional philosophy and suggest that strengthening evidence-based rehabilitation programmes may enhance reintegration outcomes and reduce recidivism.

Perceived Influence of the Criminal Justice System

This section examines inmates' perceptions of the extent to which the Nigerian criminal justice system influences criminal behaviour and behavioural change. Specifically, the construct assesses participants' views on the influence of justice officials' treatment, fairness within the justice process, rehabilitation programmes, correctional officers, recidivism reduction, and the relative importance of rehabilitation and punishment. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Disagree (1). Weighted mean scores were computed to determine respondents' level of agreement with each statement. A mean score of 3.00 and above was considered an indication of agreement.

The results presented in Table 4.8 indicate that participants generally perceived the criminal justice system as having a significant influence on offender behaviour. All seven statements recorded weighted mean scores above the benchmark of 3.00, yielding an overall grand mean of 4.39, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents.

Among the statements, "Correctional officers influence inmates' behaviour" recorded the highest weighted mean ($M = 4.69$), suggesting that respondents regarded correctional officers as playing a critical role in shaping inmates' attitudes and behaviours during incarceration. This finding underscores the importance of correctional personnel as agents of behavioural change and rehabilitation.

Similarly, participants strongly agreed that "The justice system should focus more on rehabilitation than punishment" ($M = 4.53$). This finding reflects inmates' preference for a correctional philosophy that emphasises rehabilitation, reintegration, and behavioural reform rather than purely punitive measures.

The statement "The criminal justice system can reduce recidivism" recorded a weighted mean score of 4.33, indicating that respondents believed an effectively administered criminal justice system can reduce repeat offending. Likewise, respondents agreed that rehabilitation programmes reduce criminal behaviour ($M = 4.21$), reinforcing the importance of evidence-based correctional interventions.

Participants also agreed that fair treatment encourages offenders to change ($M = 4.27$), while unfair treatment increases criminal behaviour ($M = 4.49$). These findings suggest that respondents perceived procedural fairness and respectful treatment as important determinants of behavioural outcomes. Conversely, perceptions of injustice and unfair treatment were viewed as factors capable of reinforcing antisocial attitudes and criminal behaviour.

Furthermore, participants agreed that the way justice officials treated them influenced their behaviour ($M = 4.31$). This finding highlights the importance of professional conduct by police officers, prosecutors, judges, and correctional officers throughout the criminal justice process. Fair, respectful, and humane treatment appears to promote positive behavioural adjustment among inmates.

The findings indicate that participants perceived the criminal justice system not merely as an institution responsible for punishment but also as an important mechanism for promoting rehabilitation, behavioural change, and successful reintegration into society.

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics on the Perceived Influence of the Criminal Justice System ($N = 368$)

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	The way justice officials treated me influenced my behaviour.	4.31	Agree	5
2	Fair treatment encourages offenders to change.	4.27	Agree	6
3	Unfair treatment increases criminal behaviour.	4.49	Strongly Agree	3
4	Rehabilitation programmes reduce criminal behaviour.	4.21	Agree	7
5	Correctional officers influence inmates' behaviour.	4.69	Strongly Agree	1
6	The criminal justice system can reduce recidivism.	4.33	Agree	4

7	The justice system should focus more on rehabilitation than punishment.	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
	Grand Mean	4.39	Agree	

Decision Rule: Mean $\geq$ 3.00 = Agree; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Interpretation of Findings

The findings demonstrate that participants perceived the criminal justice system as having a substantial influence on offender behaviour. Participants emphasised that the attitudes and conduct of justice officials, particularly correctional officers, play a significant role in shaping inmates' behavioural outcomes. They also indicated that fair treatment, ethical practices, and rehabilitation-oriented interventions are more likely to promote behavioural change than punitive approaches alone. These findings reinforce contemporary correctional philosophies that advocate balancing accountability with rehabilitation to achieve sustainable reductions in recidivism.

Summary of Findings

This study examined inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre in Borno State, Nigeria. The findings provide important insights into inmates' perceptions of criminal justice institutions, rehabilitation efforts, ethical practices, institutional challenges, and criminal behaviour.

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

- i. The study achieved a high response rate, with 368 valid questionnaires (99.7%) analysed, enhancing the reliability of the findings.
- ii. Most respondents were male, married, aged 26–45 years, had no formal education, were predominantly incarcerated for kidnapping, and had spent over ten years in custody.
- iii. Respondents generally perceived the criminal justice system as effective, particularly regarding the protection of legal rights, fair treatment by correctional officers, rehabilitation efforts, and overall confidence in the system. However, delays in criminal trials remained a significant concern.
- iv. Institutional challenges identified included judicial delays, prison overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, poor counselling services, corruption, limited legal representation,

poor prison conditions, and weak inter-agency coordination, all of which were perceived to hinder effective offender rehabilitation.

- v. Ethical practices were viewed positively, with respondents acknowledging professionalism, fair treatment, confidentiality, and respect for inmates' rights. Nevertheless, concerns regarding protection against inmate abuse remain.
- vi. Although many respondents expressed remorse and a willingness to lead law-abiding lives after release, some continued to report criminogenic attitudes and exposure to criminal learning during incarceration, suggesting that behavioural change remains incomplete.
- vii. Rehabilitation programmes, particularly psychological services, vocational training, education, counselling, and skills acquisition, were perceived as contributing positively to behavioural change and reintegration.
- viii. Respondents agreed that the criminal justice system significantly influences offender behaviour. Fair treatment, ethical conduct, effective rehabilitation, and positive interactions with correctional officers were identified as key factors promoting behavioural change, reinforcing the importance of a rehabilitation-oriented correctional system.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates in the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre, Nigeria. The findings indicate that inmates generally perceived the criminal justice system as effective and acknowledged the role of ethical practices and rehabilitation programmes in promoting behavioural change. However, respondents also identified institutional challenges that may hinder successful rehabilitation and increase the risk of recidivism. These findings highlight the need for a balanced correctional approach that combines procedural fairness, rehabilitation, and effective reintegration strategies.

The demographic profile showed that most participants were male, aged 26–45 years, married, had little or no formal education, were incarcerated mainly for kidnapping and other violent offences, and had spent more than ten years in custody. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that criminal offending is more prevalent among young adult males and individuals with limited educational opportunities (Farrington et al., 2021; UNODC, 2023). The predominance of participants within the economically active age group supports the age–crime relationship, which suggests that criminal behaviour peaks during early adulthood due to socioeconomic pressures such as unemployment, poverty, and social inequality (Sampson & Laub, 2022). Likewise, the high proportion of inmates with little or no formal education reinforces evidence that educational disadvantage increases vulnerability to criminal involvement by limiting legitimate economic opportunities (Akers & Jennings, 2019). The

predominance of kidnapping among participants reflects the changing nature of crime in Nigeria, where kidnapping has become closely linked to organised crime, insecurity, and socioeconomic instability. This finding suggests that criminal justice interventions should extend beyond punishment to address underlying structural drivers of crime, including poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. Furthermore, the large proportion of inmates who had spent over ten years in custody highlights the potential consequences of prolonged incarceration. Although long-term imprisonment may create opportunities for rehabilitation, it may also contribute to institutionalisation and reduce prospects for successful reintegration if meaningful rehabilitation is lacking (Haney, 2020). This underscores the importance of sustained educational, vocational, and psychological interventions throughout incarceration. The demographic findings suggest that criminal behaviour is influenced by broader socioeconomic factors rather than individual characteristics alone. Addressing these underlying factors through education, employment opportunities, and effective rehabilitation remains essential for reducing criminal behaviour and preventing recidivism.

Similarly, the findings indicate that participants generally perceived the Nigerian criminal justice system as effective. Most inmates agreed that their legal rights were protected, that correctional officers treated them with dignity, that rehabilitation was promoted, and that they had confidence in the justice system. These findings support Procedural Justice Theory, which posits that perceptions of fairness, respect, and transparency enhance institutional legitimacy and encourage compliance with the law (Tyler, 2006). The positive perceptions may also reflect reforms introduced under the Nigerian Correctional Service Act (2019), which shifted correctional practice towards rehabilitation and offender reintegration. However, participants expressed concerns about delays in criminal trials, highlighting persistent challenges in justice delivery. Similar concerns have been reported in Nigeria, where judicial delays contribute to prolonged detention and prison overcrowding (UNODC, 2023). Despite participants' confidence in the criminal justice system, the persistence of criminogenic attitudes suggests that procedural fairness alone may not be sufficient to reduce criminal behaviour. Sustainable behavioural change requires integrating fair justice processes with evidence-based rehabilitation, psychological interventions, and effective reintegration support.

Again, the findings revealed that participants perceived institutional challenges as significant barriers to effective rehabilitation. Delays in criminal trials, prison overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, limited access to legal representation, poor prison conditions, insufficient counselling services, corruption, and weak inter-agency coordination were identified as key challenges affecting the criminal justice system. The perceived inadequacy of counselling and rehabilitation programmes supports the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model, which argues that rehabilitation is most effective when interventions address offenders' criminogenic needs (Andrews & Bonta, 2017). Without adequate psychological support and cognitive-behavioural interventions, correctional institutions are less likely

to achieve meaningful behavioural change. Participants also identified prison overcrowding and delayed trials as major concerns, consistent with previous studies linking these challenges to poor prison conditions, increased stress, institutional violence, and limited access to rehabilitation services (UNODC, 2023; Penal Reform International, 2021). Similarly, limited legal representation and corruption were perceived as undermining justice delivery and public confidence in criminal justice institutions. The findings suggest that reducing criminal behaviour requires not only effective offender rehabilitation but also broader institutional reforms that improve prison conditions, strengthen legal protections, enhance inter-agency collaboration, and promote efficient justice administration.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that participants generally perceived ethical practices within the Nigerian criminal justice system positively. Inmates agreed that correctional officers treated them fairly, justice officials acted professionally, confidentiality was maintained, and ethical standards enhanced confidence in the justice system. These findings suggest that procedural fairness and professionalism contribute to positive perceptions of criminal justice institutions. The findings support Procedural Justice Theory, which posits that perceptions of fairness, respect, and transparency enhance institutional legitimacy and encourage compliance with the law (Tyler, 2006). Fair treatment by correctional personnel may therefore promote trust, improve staff–inmate relationships, and increase inmates' willingness to participate in rehabilitation programmes. This is consistent with previous studies linking positive staff–inmate interactions to improved institutional behaviour and rehabilitation outcomes (Liebling et al., 2019). Despite these positive perceptions, participants expressed comparatively lower confidence regarding protection against inmate abuse, indicating that safeguarding inmates' rights remains an important concern. This finding aligns with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), which emphasise the protection of inmates' dignity and human rights as essential components of effective correctional practice. The findings suggest that ethical practices are fundamental to effective criminal justice administration. Strengthening professionalism, accountability, and human rights compliance is likely to enhance institutional legitimacy, improve offender engagement in rehabilitation, and contribute to reducing criminal behaviour.

The findings indicate that inmates exhibited both criminogenic attitudes and intentions to change behaviour. While many respondents acknowledged remorse and expressed a willingness to live law-abiding lives after release, they also reported justifying criminal behaviour, associating with delinquent inmates, and learning new criminal methods during incarceration. This suggests that imprisonment alone may not be sufficient to change deeply rooted criminal thinking. These findings support Social Learning Theory (Akers, 1998), which posits that behaviour is learned through interaction and observation. The prison environment may inadvertently facilitate the transmission of criminal attitudes and behaviours among inmates. Similarly, the persistence of criminal thinking highlights the need for

cognitive and psychological interventions that challenge antisocial beliefs and promote prosocial decision-making.

Contradictory Findings and Implications for Rehabilitation: The most striking finding in this study is the apparent contradiction between inmates' criminogenic attitudes and their expressed remorse and intentions to reform. Respondents strongly endorsed statements such as "I often feel justified in breaking the law" ($M = 4.71$) and "Violence is sometimes necessary inside prison" ($M = 4.58$), while simultaneously expressing regret for previous criminal behaviour ($M = 4.27$) and a desire to live law-abiding lives after release ($M = 4.64$). This paradoxical pattern requires careful interpretation.

Several factors may explain this apparent contradiction. First, prison socialisation may contribute to the reinforcement of criminal attitudes as inmates adapt to a subculture that values toughness, violence, and resistance to authority (Clemmer, 1940). The prison environment, characterised by overcrowding, insecurity, and limited rehabilitation opportunities, may foster the development of coping mechanisms that include criminal thinking patterns. However, these adaptive behaviours may coexist with genuine remorse and aspirations for reform, particularly when inmates reflect on the consequences of their actions for their families and communities.

Second, the findings may reflect the influence of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), where inmates simultaneously hold conflicting beliefs about their criminal behaviour. Expressing remorse may serve to reduce guilt and justify future behaviour change, while maintaining justifications for offending may protect self-esteem and reduce the psychological burden of incarceration. Cognitive-behavioural interventions that address these contradictions may be particularly effective in promoting lasting behavioural change.

Third, the discrepancy may reflect the difference between institutional behaviour and post-release intentions. Inmates may adopt violent or rule-violating behaviours as adaptations to the prison environment while maintaining aspirations for prosocial behaviour after release. This suggests that rehabilitation programmes should address both institutional adjustment and post-release planning.

The findings suggest that effective rehabilitation should extend beyond incarceration to include structured cognitive-behavioural interventions, psychological counselling, and programmes designed to reduce criminogenic thinking and recidivism.

Rehabilitation Programmes

The participants generally perceived rehabilitation programmes as beneficial in promoting behavioural change and preparing inmates for reintegration into society. Vocational training, counselling,

educational programmes, psychological services, and religious activities were all viewed as contributing positively to personal development and reducing the likelihood of future offending.

These findings are consistent with contemporary correctional philosophy, which emphasises rehabilitation as a key strategy for reducing recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2017). Educational and vocational programmes improve employability, while counselling and psychological interventions address offenders' criminogenic needs and support positive behavioural change.

The findings therefore suggest that strengthening rehabilitation services through evidence-based interventions and continuous programme evaluation could enhance reintegration outcomes and reduce repeat offending.

Perceived Influence of the Criminal Justice System on Criminal Behaviour

The findings demonstrate that inmates perceived the criminal justice system as significantly influencing their behaviour. Participants agreed that fair treatment, ethical conduct, rehabilitation programmes, and the actions of correctional officers positively influence behavioural change. They also believed that the justice system should place greater emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment.

These findings support Procedural Justice Theory (Tyler, 2006), which argues that individuals are more likely to comply with the law when they perceive justice processes as fair and legitimate. Respectful treatment and professionalism by justice officials may therefore encourage positive behavioural outcomes and improve inmates' willingness to participate in rehabilitation.

Interpretation of Perceived Influence: It is important to note that these findings reflect inmates' subjective perceptions of influence rather than objectively demonstrated causal effects. The cross-sectional design of this study does not permit conclusions about whether the criminal justice system actually causes changes in criminal behaviour. Rather, the findings indicate that inmates believe their experiences with the criminal justice system—including treatment by officials, fairness of proceedings, and availability of rehabilitation—have influenced their attitudes and behaviours.

These perceptions are valuable because they suggest that inmates view the criminal justice system as having the potential to promote behavioural change. This belief may itself be an important factor in rehabilitation, as offenders who perceive the system as legitimate and fair may be more willing to engage in rehabilitation and adopt prosocial behaviours (Tyler, 2006). However, further research using longitudinal designs is needed to establish whether these perceptions translate into actual changes in post-release behaviour.

The findings highlight the importance of integrating procedural fairness with rehabilitation-focused correctional practices to promote behavioural reform and reduce recidivism.

Conclusion

This study examined inmates' perceptions of the influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour among inmates at the Maiduguri Maximum Security Correctional Centre in Nigeria. The findings indicate that inmates generally perceived the criminal justice system as effective in promoting justice, ethical practices, and rehabilitation. However, significant institutional challenges, including prison overcrowding, delays in criminal trials, inadequate counselling services, and limited rehabilitation opportunities, continue to undermine the system's capacity to achieve sustainable behavioural change.

The study further revealed that although many inmates expressed remorse and a willingness to lead law-abiding lives after release, some continued to exhibit criminogenic attitudes, including the justification of criminal behaviour and exposure to criminal learning during incarceration. This finding suggests that incarceration alone is insufficient to reduce criminal behaviour without complementary psychological and rehabilitative interventions.

The study concludes that the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in reducing criminal behaviour depends not only on the administration of justice but also on the quality of rehabilitation programmes, adherence to ethical standards, procedural fairness, and the availability of evidence-based correctional interventions. Strengthening these components will enhance offender rehabilitation, facilitate successful reintegration, and help reduce recidivism in Nigeria.

Caveat Regarding Perceived Influence: It must be emphasised that this study examined inmates' subjective perceptions of the criminal justice system's influence on criminal behaviour rather than objectively measuring causal relationships. The cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data do not permit conclusions about whether the criminal justice system actually causes changes in criminal behaviour. The findings reflect inmates' beliefs about the influence of criminal justice processes on their attitudes and behaviours, which are valuable for understanding rehabilitation potential but should not be interpreted as evidence of direct causation.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for criminal justice policy and correctional practice in Nigeria.

- i. Correctional institutions should strengthen rehabilitation by expanding access to psychological services, cognitive-behavioural therapy, vocational training, educational programmes, and structured counselling. These interventions should address inmates' criminogenic needs and prepare them for successful reintegration into society.
- ii. Policymakers should prioritise criminal justice reforms that reduce trial delays, improve access to legal representation, and address prison overcrowding. These reforms would enhance procedural justice, protect the rights of accused persons, and improve confidence in criminal justice institutions.
- iii. Continuous professional development should be provided for police officers, judicial officers, correctional personnel, psychologists, and counsellors to reinforce ethical conduct, human rights compliance, and rehabilitation-oriented correctional practices.
- iv. Greater collaboration among the police, judiciary, correctional services, community organisations, and mental health professionals is necessary to ensure continuity of offender management from arrest through incarceration and post-release reintegration.
- v. Government should establish comprehensive post-release reintegration programmes through partnerships with government agencies, civil society organisations, employers, religious institutions, and community-based organisations to facilitate employment, social support, and successful reintegration.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study.

The study was conducted at a single maximum-security correctional centre in Maiduguri, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other correctional institutions in Nigeria. Correctional facilities in different geopolitical zones, security contexts, and institutional conditions may yield different findings.

- i. The study relied on self-reported responses from a questionnaire. Participants' responses may have been influenced by social desirability bias, recall bias, or reluctance to disclose sensitive information related to their criminal behaviour. Additionally, self-reported behavioural intentions may not accurately predict actual post-release behaviour.
- ii. The cross-sectional research design limited the ability to establish causal relationships between factors in the criminal justice system and criminal behaviour. Longitudinal studies would provide a better understanding of behavioural changes over time and whether perceptions of the criminal justice system predict actual recidivism outcomes.

- iii. The study focused primarily on inmates' perceptions and did not include perspectives from correctional officers, judges, prosecutors, police officers, psychologists, or other criminal justice stakeholders. Incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives would provide a more comprehensive understanding of criminal justice processes.
- iv. The use of purposive sampling may limit the representativeness of the sample and the generalisability of findings. The reliance on correctional personnel for assistance in accessing inmates may have introduced selection bias.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. The Nigerian Correctional Service should strengthen rehabilitation programmes by increasing access to psychological assessment, counselling, cognitive-behavioural therapy, vocational training, educational opportunities, and reintegration support for inmates.
- ii. Government should implement policies aimed at reducing prison overcrowding through non-custodial sentencing options, parole, restorative justice programmes, and timely disposal of criminal cases.
- iii. The judiciary should adopt measures to minimise delays in criminal trials and improve access to affordable legal representation to ensure timely and equitable justice delivery.
- iv. Continuous ethics and human rights training should be provided for police officers, judicial personnel, and correctional officers to promote professionalism, procedural fairness, and respect for inmates' rights.
- v. Correctional institutions should establish multidisciplinary rehabilitation teams comprising psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, criminologists, social workers, and vocational instructors to provide comprehensive offender rehabilitation services.
- vi. Post-release reintegration programmes should be strengthened through partnerships with government agencies, civil society organisations, employers, religious institutions, and community-based organisations to facilitate employment, social support, and successful reintegration.
- vii. Future studies should employ longitudinal and mixed-method research designs involving multiple correctional facilities across different geopolitical zones of Nigeria to improve the generalisability of findings and provide deeper insights into the long-term influence of the criminal justice system on criminal behaviour. Particular attention should be paid to measuring actual recidivism outcomes rather than relying solely on self-reported behavioural intentions.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on correctional rehabilitation and criminal justice administration in Nigeria by providing empirical evidence on inmates' perceptions of the criminal justice system's influence on criminal behaviour. It demonstrates that while procedural fairness, ethical practices, and rehabilitation programmes are perceived positively, institutional constraints continue to impede effective behavioural reform. The study further extends the application of Social Learning Theory and Procedural Justice Theory in the Nigerian correctional context, providing evidence that effective offender rehabilitation requires an integrated approach that combines fair justice processes, evidence-based rehabilitation, psychological support, and successful community reintegration.

The study also contributes to the limited empirical literature from conflict-affected regions of North-East Nigeria, providing insights into the unique challenges facing correctional institutions in contexts characterised by insurgency, insecurity, and population displacement. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and rehabilitation services in such contexts to promote offender reform and reduce recidivism.

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