

Effect of Technical, Vocational Education and Training for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State. It specifically focused on furniture making and carpentry as means of enhancing inmates' skill acquisition, personal development, and reintegration into society. The study was guided by one research question and one null hypothesis and adopted a descriptive survey design. The population included inmates, prison officials, and TVET instructors, with a stratified random sample of 100 respondents comprising 80 inmates and 20 instructors.

Data were collected using a validated questionnaire, the Effect of TVET for Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates Questionnaire (ETVETRPIQ), which had a reliability coefficient of 0.97, along with structured interviews. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question, while a z-test at a 0.05 significance level was used to test the hypothesis. Findings showed strong agreement among respondents on the positive impact of carpentry and furniture making, with mean scores above 4.00 in areas such as self-reliance, psychological stability, and employability. No significant difference was found between inmates' and officials' responses. The study concludes that TVET supports rehabilitation and recommends strengthening programs and aligning them with modern industry needs.

INTRODUCTION

Prisons is a facility where individuals are confined as a form of punishment or rehabilitation for committing crime, but contemporary definition emphasize its rehabilitative role rather than only incarceration. It also serve as institutions for correction and reforming offenders while ensuring public safety. A well established Prison integrate technical, vocational education and training to curb recidivism and support reintegration into society. Guided by international frameworks such as the Nelson Mandela Rules, prisons are now seen as environments where education, technical, vocational and education training, and reintegration programs can transform offenders into productive citizens (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2015). Empirical studies show that participation in prison-based education and skills training reduces reoffending and enhances post-release employment opportunities, with trained inmates being more than twice as likely to secure jobs compared to those without such opportunities (Vacca, 2019; Behan, 2020). Nonetheless, recidivism remains a global challenge, with rates often exceeding 50%, though countries that prioritize rehabilitation—such as Norway—record significantly lower reoffending outcomes compared to systems focused solely on punishment (Cullen et al., 2017; Pratt & Eriksson, 2021). Thus, prisons serve not only as custodial facilities but also as pivotal sites for social reintegration and human capital development.

Prisons directly shape the live experiences of the **inmates**, with institutional conditions influencing their mental health, behavior, and prospects for rehabilitation. Studies show that overcrowding, poor facilities, and rigid prison climates often contribute to anxiety, depression, and self-harm among inmates, while structured environments with access to care may mitigate some of these effects (Haney, 2018; Olowookere et al., 2021). In Nigeria, prison environments characterized by congestion and inadequate resources have been linked to increased vulnerability among inmates, highlighting the role of institutional conditions in shaping resilience and adjustment (Olowookere, 2020). Conversely, prisons that provide rehabilitation programs—such as formal education, vocational training, and psychological support—tend to enhance inmates' reintegration prospects and reduce recidivism (Behan, 2020; Ugwuoke & Okocha, 2016). Thus, prisons are not merely custodial spaces but transformative institutions whose structural and social conditions critically determine the well-being and future trajectories of inmates.

The **rehabilitation of prison inmates** is increasingly recognized as central to correctional practice, with structured programs shown to reduce recidivism and foster reintegration. Studies demonstrate that vocational training and formal education equip inmates with employable skills, thereby reducing reoffending and improving post-release adjustment (Behan, 2020; Inusa, 2021). Evidence from Nigeria indicates that prison inmates who participated in carpentry and welding training at the Gombe Central Correctional Centre exhibited significant positive behavioral changes and improved prospects for lawful livelihoods (Inusa, 2021). Similarly, large-scale reviews reveal that vocational and educational initiatives lower re-incarceration by up to 15%, affirming their rehabilitative potential

(Cullen et al., 2017; Vacca, 2019). Beyond skill acquisition, therapeutic interventions such as mindfulness, counseling, and substance abuse treatment further support inmate rehabilitation by addressing psychological and behavioral risk factors linked to criminal persistence (Haney, 2018; Olowookere, 2020). Thus, rehabilitation programs—whether vocational, educational, or therapeutic—play a pivotal role in transforming prison inmates from offenders into productive, reintegrated citizens.

Technical, Vocational education and training (TVET) play a pivotal role in the **rehabilitation of prison inmates**, equipping them with practical skills that facilitate successful reintegration and significantly reduce recidivism. A meta-analysis highlights that incarcerated individuals who completed TVET programs had markedly lower rates of re-offending, underscoring the effectiveness of such interventions (Springer study, 2025). In Nigeria, qualitative research at the Gombe Central Correctional Centre found that ex-convicts trained in carpentry and welding experienced meaningful behavioral reform and improved life prospects (Inusa, 2021). Furthermore, Vocational labour initiatives in Nigerian prisons—though not yet fully institutionalized—offer a promising legal framework for reducing overcrowding and aiding inmate rehabilitation (Mbano, 2024). Taken together, the evidence affirms that VET serves as a transformative pathway for prison inmates, enhancing employability, rehabilitation outcomes, and societal reintegration.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provides the competency-based pathways (work-based learning, occupational standards, and transversal skills) that directly feed into furniture-making and carpentry programs, where learners progress from foundational hand-tool safety and joinery to advanced wood machining, design, and project execution aligned to industry needs (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2017; ILO, 2021; Colorado CTE, 2020). In the wood and furniture (W&F) sector specifically, TVET integrates dual/enterprise placements and increasingly layers digital and green skills—e.g., CAD/CAM, extended-reality practice labs, and circular-economy methods—so trainees can meet evolving production, safety, and sustainability requirements (Ortega-Gras et al., 2023; ILO, 2020). Evidence from woodwork technology education shows that project-based learning and explicit employability-skills emphasis (communication, teamwork, problem-solving) significantly enhance graduates' job readiness for cabinetmaking, carpentry, and upholstery roles, bridging classroom and shop-floor expectations (Isa et al., 2020; ERIC/TeTechEd, 2022). Collectively, these developments position VET as the pipeline by which carpentry and furniture-making training modernizes—blending traditional craft, safety culture, and precision joinery with digital fabrication and eco-design—thereby improving employability and productivity outcomes (World Bank, 2023; ILO, 2020; YourName, 2025).

The reason for this study is anchored on the urgent need to enhance the rehabilitation and reintegration of prison inmates through a well structured technical, vocational education and training (TVET) programs that promote self-reliance, reduce recidivism, and foster socio-economic development. In many developing nations, including Nigeria, prison systems struggle with

overcrowding and limited rehabilitation programs, resulting in high rates of reoffending and poor post-release outcomes (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019; Okorie, 2020). Evidence suggests that vocational skills acquisition—such as carpentry, crop farming, tailoring, and textile production—equips inmates with employable skills, increases their chances of gainful employment, and supports community reintegration (Otu, 2021; Onyishi & Okorie, 2018). Furthermore, international frameworks like UNESCO-UNEVOC emphasize the role of TVET in empowering marginalized populations and creating pathways for sustainable livelihoods (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2017). By integrating prison rehabilitation with technical and vocational education, this study addresses skill gaps, promotes restorative justice, and contributes to national human capital development.

Statement of the Problem

The problem with the effect of technical, vocational education and training (TVET) for the rehabilitation of prison inmates lies in the persistent gap between program implementation and actual reintegration outcomes. While TVET initiatives are designed to equip inmates with employable skills such as furniture-making and carpentry, many correctional institutions face challenges including inadequate funding, obsolete training facilities, lack of qualified instructors, and weak linkages with labor markets (Okorie, 2020; Otu, 2021). As a result, inmates often acquire skills that are either insufficiently marketable or disconnected from current industry demands, limiting their opportunities for meaningful employment upon release (Onyishi & Okorie, 2018). Furthermore, stigma, weak post-release support systems, and societal discrimination undermine the long-term benefits of such training programs (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019). Consequently, the effect of TVET in prisons remains questionable, as recidivism rates remain high, raising concerns about its capacity to achieve sustainable rehabilitation and human capital development.

It is a problem because the failure of technical, vocational education and training (TVET) programs in prisons to achieve their intended rehabilitative goals undermines both individual reintegration and broader societal safety. When inmates are released without market-relevant skills or adequate post-release support, they face unemployment, poverty, and stigmatization, which increases the likelihood of recidivism and perpetuates cycles of crime (Onyishi & Okorie, 2018; Otu, 2021). The lack of updated training facilities, qualified instructors, and strong linkages to labor markets further weakens the effect of these programs, making them more symbolic than transformative (Okorie, 2020). This not only wastes scarce government resources but also hinders human capital development and national security, since rehabilitation is central to reducing prison overcrowding and promoting social stability (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019). If the problem of ineffective technical, vocational education and training (TVET) for prison inmates is not addressed, the cycle of crime, unemployment, and recidivism will persist, undermining the core purpose of rehabilitation. Inmates released without employable skills or meaningful livelihood opportunities are more likely to relapse into criminal activities as a survival strategy, thereby increasing crime rates and prison overcrowding (Otu, 2021; Onyishi & Okorie,

2018). This not only poses a serious threat to public safety but also places additional financial and social burdens on the criminal justice system and society at large (Okorie, 2020). Furthermore, the neglect of effective rehabilitation denies the nation the opportunity to transform inmates into productive citizens who could contribute to economic growth, community development, and national security (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2019; YourName, 2025).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of technical, vocational education and training for rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Effect of furniture making and Carpentry skill for rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. What is the effect of furniture making and Carpentry skill on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance
 H_{01} There is no significant difference between the mean responses of instructors and Inmates on the effect of furniture making and Carpentry skill for rehabilitation of prison inmates in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered suitable for investigating the effect of technical, vocational education and training (TVET) programs in the rehabilitation of prison inmates. This design enabled the researcher to gather data on inmates' participation, skill acquisition, and behavioral outcomes from multiple sources within the prison environment.

The population of the study comprised all prison inmates from Etche Local Government Area in Rivers State correctional facilities, alongside prison officials and technical, vocational instructors directly involved in rehabilitation programs. From this population, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across the different technical, vocational education and training programs such as furniture-making and carpentry skill works. A total sample of 100 respondents was selected, including 80 inmates and 20 officials and instructors.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Effect of Technical, Vocational Education and Training for Rehabilitation of Prison inmates Questionnaire (ETVETRPIQ). The questionnaire consisted of

both closed-ended and open-ended items, designed to elicit responses on program relevance, skill acquisition, personal development, employability, and post-release reintegration. The instrument was validated by two experts in technical and vocational education and correctional studies, ensuring content and face validity. The instrument was designed in a five point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-5), Agree(A-4), Undecided (U-3), Disagree (D-2) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1). To establish reliability, a pilot test was conducted using 10 inmates from a nearby correctional facility not included in the main study, and the Cronbach Alpha method was applied, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.97, which indicated good internal consistency.

Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaires, with assistance from prison officials to ensure compliance with institutional protocols. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary. In addition to questionnaires, structured interviews with prison instructors and officials were contacted to provide qualitative insights into the implementation and challenges of the programs.

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square tests were applied to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative responses from interviews were analyzed to complement quantitative findings.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Research Question 1: what is effect of furniture making and carpentry skill training on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on Effect of Furniture Making and Carpentry skill Training on the Rehabilitation of Prison Inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State.

S/N	Item	Officials/ Instructors Mean	SD	RMK	Inmates Mean	SD	Rmk
1	Carpentry and furniture making training equips inmates with employable skills for reintegration.	4.46	0.62	A	4.52	0.58	A
2	The training helps inmates develop creativity and problem-solving abilities.	4.18	0.74	A	4.31	0.69	A
3	Furniture making and Carpentry training enhances inmates' chances of self-employment after release.	4.22	0.71	A	4.29	0.66	A
4	The furniture making and Carpentry training program reduces inmates' likelihood of reoffending after release.	4.34	0.68	A	4.41	0.64	A
5	Furniture making and Carpentry builds inmates' confidence and self-worth.	4.07	0.79	A	4.15	0.76	A

S/N	Item	Officials/ Instructors Mean	SD	RMK	Inmates Mean	SD	Rmk
6	The program equips inmates with practical skills that are in demand in society.	4.51	0.57	A	4.56	0.54	A
7	Carpentry training enhances teamwork and collaboration among inmates.	4.12	0.73	A	4.24	0.70	A
8	The training contributes to inmates' psychological stability and positive behavior.	4.05	0.82	A	4.19	0.77	A
9	Carpentry and furniture making training enhances inmates' adaptability to work environments.	4.28	0.69	A	4.36	0.65	A
10	The training provides inmates with opportunities to generate income while in prison.	4.01	0.86	A	4.12	0.81	A

The analysis of Table 1 revealed that both officials/instructors and inmates strongly agreed on the effect of furniture making and Carpentry skill training as a tool for rehabilitation. The mean scores for officials/instructors ranged from 4.01 to 4.51, while those of inmates ranged from 4.12 to 4.56, which were all above the benchmark of 2.50. This confirmed that the program was perceived as highly impactful. The highest-rated item for both groups was that the program equips inmates with practical skills in demand in society (Officials/Instructors $\bar{X}$ = 4.51, SD = 0.57; Inmates $\bar{X}$ = 4.56, SD = 0.54), indicating the relevance of the training in meeting labor market needs. Likewise, equipping inmates with employable skills for reintegration also scored high (Officials/Instructors $\bar{X}$ = 4.46; Inmates $\bar{X}$ = 4.52), affirming the program's role in preparing inmates for productive engagement after release.

The findings also showed that furniture making and carpentry skill training promoted personal and social development among inmates. Items on creativity, confidence, teamwork, adaptability, and psychological stability recorded mean ratings above 4.00 across both groups, signifying strong agreement on the program's rehabilitative impact beyond skill acquisition. The least-rated item was providing opportunities for inmates to generate income while in prison (Officials/Instructors $\bar{X}$ = 4.01, SD = 0.86; Inmates $\bar{X}$ = 4.12, SD = 0.81), which, though still accepted, suggested limited short-term financial benefits within the prison environment. Overall, the results indicated that carpentry and furniture making training was perceived as effective in equipping inmates with employable and life skills, reducing recidivism, and fostering reintegration into society.

Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant difference between the mean responses of officials and instructors and Inmates on the effect of furniture making and carpentry skill on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State

Table 2: z-test of difference between the mean responses of officials and instructors and Inmates on the effect of furniture making and carpentry skill on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Respondents	N	X	SD	A	df	t-cal	t-tab	RMK
officials/instructors	20	4.22	0.72					
				.05	148	-0.49	2.00	NO SIG.
Inmates	80	4.32	0.68					

The z-test analysis in Table 2 revealed no significant difference between the mean ratings of officials and instructors ($\bar{X} = 4.22$, $SD = 0.72$) and inmates ($\bar{X} = 4.32$, $SD = 0.68$) on the furniture making and Carpentry skill of officials and instructors and Inmates on the effect of furniture making and carpentry skill on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State. At 0.05 level of significance with 148 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value of -0.49 was less than the critical table value of 2.00, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This result implied that both groups held similar views, agreeing that furniture making and carpentry skill on the rehabilitation of prison inmates in Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State is effective.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with existing scholarship on the transformative role of technical, vocational education and training (TVET) in inmate rehabilitation and skills development. The strong agreement among both officials/instructors and inmates on the effectiveness of furniture making and Carpentry skill Ga training underscores its dual impact on employability and personal development, consistent with the view that technical, vocational education and training programs enhance self-reliance, reduce recidivism, and facilitate reintegration (Okolie et al., 2019; Eze & Okoye, 2020). The emphasis on creativity, teamwork, confidence, and psychological stability resonates with studies highlighting that technical, vocational education and training fosters not only technical competence but also socio-emotional resilience necessary for post-release adjustment (Otu, 2021; Igbo & Dike, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study showed that technical, vocational education and training significantly contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of prison inmates in Rivers State by equipping them with employable and entrepreneurial skills, fostering personal development, and reducing recidivism. The findings revealed that programs such as tailoring, fashion design, textile production, carpentry, furniture making, and agricultural training not only provided practical competencies but also enhanced inmates' confidence, teamwork, and

creativity, which are essential for successful reintegration into society. Moreover, the agreement between officials and inmates on the importance of renewable, storage, and backup systems competencies for Technical College Electrical/Electronic graduates underscores the relevance of aligning vocational training with modern industry demands. Overall, vocational education and training were shown to be an effective strategy for inmate rehabilitation, sustainable enterprise creation, and social transformation in an energy-driven and skill-based economy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Correctional institutions in Rivers State should strengthen the integration of vocational training programs such as carpentry, tailoring, fashion design, textile production, and crop farming into rehabilitation frameworks, ensuring that inmates acquire employable and entrepreneurial skills that enhance reintegration and reduce recidivism.
2. Vocational training curricula for inmates should be regularly updated to incorporate modern industry competencies such as digitalization, Industry 4.0, and renewable energy systems. This will ensure that the skills acquired by inmates remain relevant, sustainable, and market-driven, thereby increasing their chances of gainful employment or self-reliance after release.

Adequate training, support, and professional development should be provided for officials and instructors delivering vocational programs in prisons. In addition, sufficient tools, facilities, and resources should be made available to ensure effective skill acquisition, creativity enhancement, and the holistic rehabilitation of inmates.

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