

**IMPACTS OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES IN CHILDREN  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRE, UGBEKUN, BENIN CITY, EDO  
STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the impacts of vocational programmes on juvenile offenders in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. The study reviewed existing studies on the impacts of vocational programmes in children correctional centres. The research used a qualitative approach, with 30 participants through purposive sampling. Appropriate data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The participants, all first-time offenders, had been arrested for various crimes, including theft, rape, possession of weapons and attempted murder. The study showed that effective vocational programmes lead to positive behavioural changes and successful reintegration into society, making juveniles self-sufficient and content. The findings suggest that vocational programmes reduce recidivism, unlike mere incarceration. The study recommends that correctional staff receive more training in rehabilitation techniques, the facilities be improved, and the government work with stakeholders to provide better funding and resources for the vocational programmes.

**Keywords:** Effective Vocational Programmes, Children Correctional Centre, Juvenile Offenders Ugbekun, Benin City

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Children Correctional Centre provides support and guidance to young individuals who have encountered legal issues (Alamu & Makinde, 2020). The Children and Youth Act II provides a legal framework for addressing matters related to minors in Nigeria, with a focus on care, handling, and juvenile courts. The Centre for Juvenile Correction serves not only as a barrier between the community and juvenile offenders but also as a place for rehabilitation, skills development, and reintegration into society (Uche et al., 2015). Rehabilitation programmes include vocational training (Lillis, 2018). This study aims to examine the impacts of rehabilitation programmes at the Ugbekun-based Centre for Juvenile Correction in Benin City. Adolescents require special attention due to their vulnerable stage, as untreated deviance during this period may persist into adulthood (Nyakatawa, 2018). Strengthening rehabilitation efforts at the Centre for Juvenile Correction could significantly reduce criminality locally and nationally (International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research, 2019).

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Globally, the challenges in rehabilitating young offenders within the juvenile justice system have led to concerning outcomes, including frequent violence in correctional centres (Uche et al., 2015). Benin City, in particular, faces a significant concern with the rising recurrence of

juvenile offences. Despite the Nigerian Correctional System's efforts to reform offenders, the goals have fallen short, with children often returning to correctional centres (Tribune, 2020). The rehabilitation process has proven ineffective, releasing offenders who are more entrenched and dangerous rather than reformed individuals (Uche et al., 2015). Recent studies suggest that children's correctional centres has become breeding grounds for criminals, fostering a cycle of criminal sophistication (Uche et al., 2015). The ability for correctional centres to deliver behaviour-altering programmes has emerged as a significant challenge, with adolescents often lacking a clear understanding of their detention (Kithaka & Kariuki, 2018). The investigation is further motivated by the growing trend of delinquency in Benin City, despite governmental efforts to address the alarming prevalence of juvenile delinquency (Nyakatawa, 2018). Flawed rehabilitation programmes create a dangerous cycle. When children do not receive proper rehabilitation, they are more likely to become hardened criminals upon release. Feeling like victims of a broken system, they may lash out at a society they see as unfair. This explains the high recidivism rate among ex-juvenile delinquents, reflecting the worrying trend of rising juvenile crime (Nyakatawa, 2018).

### **Research Question**

What are the impacts of vocational programmes in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City?

### **Objective of the Study**

Assess the impacts of vocational programmes in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City on the children's behaviour, education and productivity.

### **Significance of the Study**

Rehabilitation offers a more constructive approach. This highlights the need for effective vocational programmes as a rehabilitation strategy to positively impact young individuals (Onyeozili & Uzoh, 2022). The findings of this study have important implications for the management of juvenile detention centres in Nigeria. The insights will inform the development of rehabilitation plans and guide those designing programmes for young people. Additionally, this research will benefit future researchers in related fields, as well as the government, academia, policymakers, investigators, and the general public, by providing valuable knowledge.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rehabilitation programmes hold vital implications for societal safety on post-prisoner release. A multitude of enquiries has probed prison milieu repercussions, encompassing both punitive and corrective avenues. Amidst divergent scopes and protocols, methodical appraisals unveil striking result uniformity. Managerial and clearance manoeuvres, optimally, yield marginal mean recidivism decreases among juveniles and, in certain cases, trigger incongruent outcomes, escalating relapse ratios. It is worth mentioning that the efficacy-laden rehabilitation modes born of research stand disjointed from prevalent rehabilitation practices, erecting a conspicuous research-practice fissure.

Many studies have probed prison settings, scrutinising corrective methods alongside renewal protocols. Despite differing exposures and techniques, methodical assessments of these studies consistently uncover a striking pattern in their overall conclusions. Administrative steps and authorizations, in optimal scenarios, trigger small decreases in juvenile relapse frequencies. On occasion, they yield incongruous outcomes, fostering a surge in re-offence rates (Igbinoia & Omorogiuwa, 2019).

The impacts of juvenile rehabilitation schemes hold crucial implications for societal security following detainees' release from confinement. Numerous inquiries have investigated penitentiary milieu effects, with some focusing on punitive strategies, while others delve into reformation protocols. Methodical examinations of these inquiries, even though methodologies and exposures differ widely, reveal significant uniformity in their collective conclusions. Administrative decrees and authorizations, in the best-case scenario, demonstrate reduction in recidivism rates among juveniles and, sporadically, produce divergent outcomes, fostering heightened relapse indices. The challenges associated with how effectively rehabilitation initiatives operate within juvenile correctional facilities carry significant implications for the safety of the community upon the juveniles' reintegration. Numerous studies have explored the consequences of the correctional environment. Indeed, some have examined methods of maintaining order, while others have delved into the coordination of rehabilitation efforts. Furthermore, the manner in which the return to criminal behaviour manifests itself has captured the attention of those who scrutinise therapeutic endeavours. To simplify, the issues intertwined with the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts in centres designed for young offenders encompass complications such as unethical behaviour, understaffing concerns, financial shortages, and inadequate staff (Kehinde, 2017).

The situation regarding the handling of rehabilitation in children correctional centres has posed a significant concern in numerous correctional facilities for children. The rate of reoccurrence among these children, getting into trouble again, remains alarmingly high, primarily because the type of rehabilitation they receive isn't effectively fulfilling its purpose. Researchers have highlighted that the reason rehabilitation isn't yielding a positive impact on these youngsters is that the emphasis truly isn't on how well these rehabilitation programmes are performing (Nyakatawa, 2018). Financial constraints, or rather the absence of sufficient funds, also present a substantial challenge in these institutions designed to assist children in reforming. A comprehensive investigation carried out by Otukho (2018) into the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes revealed that lack of vital resources necessary to adequately educate the juveniles. The tools and technology required to offer young offenders a genuine opportunity are absent. Besides, there is a shortage of trained staff to effectively guide these children through the process. Adding to the complexity, a previous study disclosed that the majority of these facilities where children are expected to be reformed are overcrowded with more children than they can accommodate. This surplus of juveniles ends up straining the already limited resources, directly impacting the effectiveness of any rehabilitation efforts (Nyakatawa, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was analysed on the theoretical framework of Rehabilitation. A recently emerging perspective on punishment centres on rehabilitation programmes. According to this viewpoint, the primary aim of imposing penalties is to offer corrective measures and guidance to the wrongdoer. This facilitates their eventual reintegration into the community, assuming a role as a law-abiding contributor. The on-going investigation drew inspiration from Jean Hampton's

rehabilitation theory, which provides a distinct perspective. Central to Jean Hampton's Moral Education Theory of Punishment (MET) is the emphasis on raising awareness among offenders about their transgressions. In the first aspect, Hampton presents the idea that an excessively severe response to an individual's wrongdoing runs counter to moral principles. Second, there is the potential to reintegrate offenders into society as valuable contributors. To phrase it differently, the theory of rehabilitation emphasises the concept that wrongdoers can be redeemed through reform, in contrast to the theory of incapacitation, which likens criminals to untameable creatures destined for perpetual confinement. Third, it is vital to perceive those who breach the law as distinct individuals with precise requisites and matters that require acknowledgement in order to enable correctional administrators to efficiently handle their cases. Advocates of the rehabilitation ideology present an additional argument that subjecting minors to severe penalties cannot be foreseen to yield reform and successful reintegration after detention. The primary focal point of the rehabilitation concept is to ensure that minors do not lapse into misconduct after their exposure to rehabilitation initiatives aimed at fostering constructive and valuable reintegration into society. As a result, the rehabilitation concept strives to curb recurring offences by asserting that the provision of rehabilitation efforts for young wrongdoers will culminate in their adherence to societal norms and their capability to make positive contributions within the community.

Fourth, the discourse presented by Hampton emphasises the bestowal provided by the MET (Mindful Empowerment Technique), conferring self-governing ability upon each entity – a fundamental principle.

By utilizing insights provided by theorists specialising in rehabilitation, this examination of the effects of reformatory efforts within youth correctional centres in Ugbekun, located near Benin City, explores the potential for positive transformation in young individuals nurtured through such initiatives. Consequently, the central aspiration held by these interventions within juvenile correctional facilities revolves around fostering positive changes in behaviour among young offenders, thereby facilitating their smooth transition into responsible members of society following their reintegration phase. Furthermore, an essential aspect concerns the personalised recognition of specific exigencies and challenges faced by individual juveniles, thereby paving the way for the meticulous tailoring of corresponding reformatory protocols aimed at achieving comprehensive reclamation while simultaneously curbing the possibilities of relapse. Additionally, it is noteworthy these reclamation blueprints not only serve to reinstate the entitlement of self-governance—an intrinsic human right, as elaborated upon by Hampton's Paradigm of Ethical Pedagogy that underpins punitive paradigms—but also serve to provide youthful offenders with a renewed perception of self-directed authority.

Essentially, within the scope of this investigation, the theory of rehabilitation aimed to establish a foundation for addressing the reformation of young offenders. The main emphasis was on altering their behaviour, enabling them to choose legitimate avenues to fulfil their needs. The theory underscored the significance of immersing these juveniles in rehabilitation endeavours, ultimately equipping them to lead lawful lives and achieve financial self-sufficiency upon their reintegration into society (Nyakatawa, 2018).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a qualitative research design. The approach prioritized understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of participants surrounding the vocational programmes. The

study population consisted of both male and female juveniles and officials in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to strategically select a diverse group of 30 participants (25 juveniles and 5 correctional officials). This ensured a variety of viewpoints and experiences were captured to achieve a well-rounded understanding. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 juveniles. This method allowed for detailed exploration of their experiences within the vocational programmes and their perceived impacts. Focus group discussion was held with 5 correctional officials. This facilitated a group setting where officials shared their perspectives and insights on the impacts of vocational programmes on the juveniles in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. Content analysis was employed to systematically analyse the collected data from interviews and the focus group discussion. This process involved identifying, coding, and categorising recurring themes within the data to extract key findings. The study ensured credibility, reliability and validity by sharing interview transcripts and focus group summaries with participants to verify the accuracy of their experiences and interpretations. Also, triangulations of data sources were achieved by utilizing both interviews and focus groups, and they strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings by corroborating information from different perspectives. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all participants before the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion commenced. This was to ensure the participants understood the objective of the study and their right to withdraw at any point. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Children in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City**

Participants' identification	Age	Sex	Nationality	State	Religion	Level of education	Crime	Previous offence
Juvenile 1	16	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	JSS3	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 2	15	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	JSS2	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 3	16	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	JSS2	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 4	14	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 2	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 5	15	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 6	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 6	15	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 6	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 7	15	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 5	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 8	16	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	SSS3	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 9	14	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	Never been to school	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 10	15	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	JSS1	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 11	16	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	Primary 6	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 12	15	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	Primary 4	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 13	16	M	Nigerian	Katsina	Islam	JSS3	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 14	10	M	Nigerian	Borno	Islam	Never been to school	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 15	16	M	Nigerian	Imo	Christianity	SSS2	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 16	15	M	Nigerian	Rivers	Christianity	SSS2	Stealing	Nil
Juvenile 17	16	M	Nigerian	Cross River	Christianity	JSS1	Rape	Nil
Juvenile 18	14	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 4	Rape	Nil

Juvenile 19	13	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	JSS2	Murder	Nil
Juvenile 20	15	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	SSS2	Attempted Murder	Nil
Juvenile 21	16	M	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	JSS3	Possession of fire arm	Nil
Juvenile 22	16	M	Nigerian	Delta	Christianity	Primary 6	Fighting	Nil
Juvenile 23	16	M	Nigerian	Ondo	Christianity	JSS1	Fighting	Nil
Juvenile 24	16	F	Nigerian	Edo	Christianity	Primary 1	Care & Protection	Nil
Juvenile 25	12	F	Nigerian	Ebonyi	Christianity	Never been to school	Care & Protection	Nil

*Source: Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City.*

Table 1 above shows the profiles of the juveniles in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. The young offenders' ages were around ten years to sixteen years (10-16). Majority of the children were still in elementary school before they were involved in delinquency which led to their arrest, detention and rehabilitation at the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. Sixteen (16) out of the twenty-five (25) juveniles who were interviewed were arrested for stealing, while the remaining children committed crimes such as rape, fighting, murder, and illegal possession of firearms. All the twenty-five juveniles who were interviewed were first-time offenders.

**Table 2: Demographic Profiles of the Officials in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City**

Participant's Identification	Sex	Marital Status	Nationality	State	Religion	Occupation	Work Experience
SWO 1	M	Married	Nigeria	Edo	Christianity	Social welfare officer	5
SWO 2	M	Single	Nigeria	Edo	Christianity	Social welfare officer	4
SWO 3	F	Married	Nigeria	Edo	Christianity	Social welfare officer	2
CCC 1	F	Married	Nigeria	Edo	Christianity	Cook	15
CCG 1	M	Married	Nigeria	Edo	Christianity	Guard	2

*Source: Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City.*

The above table shows the profiles of the officials who work in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. There were three social welfare officers (SWO), one correctional centre cook (CCC) and one correctional centre guard (CCG). The group consisted of three males and two females. As indicated in table 2 above, the officials have working experience of two years to fifteen years of working experience in the correctional centre.

**Table 3: Impacts of Vocational Programmes in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City**

Main themes	Sub themes	Comments
Impacts of Vocational Programmes	Positive Behavioural Change	Vocational programmes such as farming, hairdressing, barbing, tailoring and catering have positive impacts on the children. Many of the juveniles have regretted involving in criminal behaviours.
	Productivity and Self-reliance	All the respondents concurred that the acquisition of skills helps young offenders to be productive. They asserted that many of the children can make hair, cut hair and cook food effectively as a result of the vocational skills they have learnt at the correctional centre. Besides, they can make money from the skills and become self-reliant.
	Appreciation of Dignity of Labour	The majority of the respondents declared that the juveniles' participation in vocational skills has not only helped them to acquire knowledge but also appreciate that there is dignity in labour hence, they abhor criminal life.

*Source: Field Survey, 2023.*

Table 3 above shows the themes of the impacts of vocational programmes and sub-themes, namely, positive behavioural change, productivity, self-reliance and dignity of labour.

The findings of the study demonstrate the potential of rehabilitation programmes to achieve positive transformations in young offenders. By fostering positive behavioural change, self-reliance, appreciation of work, and a sense of responsibility, vocational programmes can empower young people to become productive and law-abiding members of society, aligning with the core principles of the rehabilitation theory of Jean Hampton's Moral Education Theory of Punishment (MET).

### **Impacts of Vocational Programme on the Juveniles in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City**

Acquisition of vocational skills assists juvenile delinquents in changing their behaviour positively. The vocational programmes help the juveniles to realise that there is dignity in engaging in legal labour. Besides, the acquisition of vocational skills will make them to shun antisocial behaviour and become functional members of society when they are released.

#### **Sub-theme 1: Positive Behavioural Change**

All the participants agreed that the acquisition of vocational skills has positive changes on the behaviour of the juveniles. The following are excerpts from some of the participants:

“Most of the juveniles have positive changes in their behaviour as a result of their participation in vocational programmes which occupy their minds” (SWO 1).

“I was very stubborn and disobedient when I was brought here three weeks ago, but I am a calm and obedient person now because I have been exposed to worthwhile rehabilitation programmes and there is no opportunity to associate with bad friends” (Juvenile 17).

“I saw myself as useless before, but I can now see positive things about myself as a result of the acquisition of vocational skills. I would like to be a fashion designer because I have acquired the necessary skills here” (Juvenile 11).

As a social welfare officer, I have observed positive changes in the behaviour of juveniles as they participate in the vocational programmes” (SWO 3).

“Some of the juveniles always give security officers a tough time when they are newly admitted, but within a short time of exposure to vocational programmes, they become focussed, engaged, calm and reformed” (CCG 1).

“The vocational programmes here, especially the farming programme, have remoulded me positively because I am no longer lazy nor think of engaging in crime” (Juvenile 19).

### **Sub-theme 2: Acquisition of Skills**

“The vocational programmes are really impactful on the children in the sense that I can leave the juveniles alone in the kitchen and they will cook excellently” (CCC 1).

Juvenile 22 said, “I can play church band, barb hair and cook food very well, which I could not do before I was arrested and detained in this correctional centre”.

“The correctional centre has made me to realize that I can work with my hands and earn money by acquiring skills instead of stealing” (Juvenile 1).

“The vocational programmes are very impactful. I can cook very well now. Indeed, I am the manager in charge of the kitchen because of my skills in catering, which I learnt in this correctional centre” (Juvenile 3).

### **Sub-theme 3: Dignity of Labour**

“Our participation in the farming programme in this correctional centre has made us to learn and discover that there are blessings and honours with joy when we work with our own hands instead of stealing” (Juvenile 10).

“As social welfare officers, we counsel the children to be self-reliant and contented with what they have” (SWO 2). “We have harvested cassava, corn and plantain from our farm here. This is to teach the children that they need to eat no matter how bad is the situation, and in order to get food, they should learn farming skills” (SWO 3).

“The children’s participation in farming programme here has made the juveniles to know that there is no food for a lazy man” (CCG 1).

“I have never tilled the soil before I came here, but now I know how to weed and plant crops” (Juvenile 24).

“Farming programme in this correctional centre is very impactful as we often get produce from it” (Juvenile 22).



“We do not buy corn because we harvest them from our farm” (Juvenile 7).

### **Instances of how Vocational Programmes have impacted the Juveniles in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City**

The excerpts below were some of the responses received when the participants were asked to give instances of how the acquisition of skills has impacted the juveniles in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City.

“Some children who have been released from here sometimes visit to counsel us and tell us how the vocational programmes they acquired at the correctional centre are helping them to live a positive life void of antisocial behaviour” (Juvenile 2).

“A child came to tell us he is making money from hairdressing and barbing skills he learnt when he was at the correctional centre” (Juvenile 6).

“We usually receive positive feedback on the impacts of the vocational programmes on the juveniles when we carry out post-rehabilitation programmes” (SWO 1).

“I used to be very stubborn, quarrelsome but I have been reformed as a result of the vocational programmes that I am being exposed to here in children correctional centre, Ugbekun, Benin City” (Juveniles 17).

“Instances of positive impacts of the vocational programme on juveniles abound. There were cases of three children who were drug addicts, but when we exposed them to the vocational programme, they changed positively within a short period” (SWO 2).

“Most of the children were hopeless when admitted, but with the intervention of our rehabilitation programmes, especially the vocational programme, they have hope and sense of responsibility” (SWO 3).

In a nutshell, vocational programmes have adequately impacted juveniles in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. It changes their behaviour positively and reduces recidivism.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, vocational programmes are impactful in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City as indicated in the literature review. They reform and reintegrate the juvenile delinquents into society to become law-abiding and productive. The vocational programmes, such as anger management, farming, tailoring, hairdressing, barbing, and catering programmes in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City, were explored in the study with a view to ascertaining the impacts. Therefore, the study concluded that vocational programmes in the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City, are impactful in reforming juveniles. The Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City has many challenges such as a lack of vital resources necessary to adequately educate the juveniles, absence of trained teachers, and inadequate security personnel as stated in the literature review.

### **Contribution**

Positive behavioural change, appreciation of dignity of labour, productivity, and self-reliance as the findings of the study offer valuable insights that corroborate and extend the existing literature on vocational programmes.

The study corroborates the previous finding on recidivism rates. The findings of the study on positive behavioural change suggest vocational programmes contribute to the reduction of crime rates, aligning with existing research.

The research gives new insights by going beyond just recidivism rates by focusing on internal changes in young offenders. Positive behavioural change, appreciation of work, and self-reliance are crucial for successful reintegration. These findings offer a more holistic understanding of the impacts of vocational programmes in the children's correctional centre.

The study offers insights into specific interventions that contribute to positive behavioural change, skill development, and self-reliance by focussing on the impacts of vocational programmes in Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City. Also, the study can inform the development of more effective rehabilitation programmes across correctional facilities. The study offers insights into resource allocation within vocational programmes and how to potentially overcome some of the challenges associated with rehabilitation programmes.

In summary, the findings of the study complement the existing literature by providing a more nuanced view of the impacts of rehabilitation programmes. It emphasizes internal changes in young offenders, explores specific programmes that contribute to positive outcomes, and could inform the development of more effective interventions in the future.

### **Recommendations**

More funds should be released to the Children Correctional Centre, Ugbekun, Benin City so that the essential machines and materials needed for effective rehabilitation of the juvenile can be purchased.

Furthermore, the correctional buildings should be renovated for security purposes.

In addition, there should be training and retraining for the correctional officials, especially the social welfare officers to enlighten them on the issue of rehabilitation services and to equip them with the prerequisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for the effective rehabilitation of juveniles.

Finally, the government should collaborate with all stakeholders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like, GIZ, SOS Children Village, USAID and UNICEF, to raise funds that will help to purchase most of the machines and materials that are needed for vocational programmes with a view to having more positive impacts on the juveniles.

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