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## Strategies for Preventing Jail Breaks in Correctional Centers in South-East, Nigeria

Akaolisa Joshua Ojiochie<sup>1</sup> and Nneka Perpetua Oli<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author's Email: [nnekaoli@yahoo.com](mailto:nnekaoli@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

This work examined the strategies for preventing jailbreaks in correctional centers in South-East, Nigeria. For the past two decades now, the Nigerian Correctional Centers across the states have witnessed one form of jail breaks or Correctional Centre breaks or the other and this has continued to pose a serious threat to the society. The regulatory capture theory and frustration-aggression theory were adopted as the theoretical framework. The study adopted the mixed methods research design, Multistage Sampling procedure was used in the selection of 999 respondents. The target population was 9,878, it consisted of inmates and officers in Federal Correctional Centers in South-East, Nigeria. The questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide served as instruments for data collection. The quantitative data were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Frequency tables, simple percentages and graphic illustrations were used to analyze, describe and present the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were transcribed manually and analyzed using thematic method. The findings from the respondents indicated that infrastructure should be improved. This suggests that many respondents believe that enhancing the physical conditions and security features of correctional facilities is crucial for preventing escapes. Following infrastructure improvements, the next most supported measure is improving the logistic system. This indicates that respondents see value in optimizing how resources are allocated and managed within correctional facilities. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the infrastructure in correctional centers should be improved and corruption within the criminal justice system should also be addressed.

**Keywords:** correctional centers, criminals, inmates, jailbreaks, recidivism

### Introduction

Jail break is the aggressive use of an illegal means or force to achieve self-liberation from correctional centers in avoidance of punishment. Jail break could be violently executed or otherwise. Most jail breaks are facilitated from outside the correctional facilities by armed insurgents, through the deployment of deadly weapons and explosives, to set free members and recruit more into their fold. Terrorists have employed violent jail breaks to rescue their members and recruit new members (Manu, 2022). The execution of jailbreaks can be categorized into two

primary approaches: violent and non-violent. Violent jail breaks often involve armed assaults on correctional facilities, where insurgents or terrorists employ weapons and explosives to breach security measures (Shajobi-Ibikunle, 2014). These operations are meticulously planned and executed with the intent to free specific individuals, often members of their own group who may be imprisoned due to their criminal activities or political affiliations. The use of deadly force not only aims at liberating inmates but also serves as a recruitment tool for these groups, showcasing their power and influence. On the other hand, non-violent jail breaks might include methods such as bribery, manipulation of legal loopholes, or exploiting weaknesses in security protocols. While less common than their violent counterparts, these strategies can still lead to successful escapes without direct confrontation (Okere, 2017).

The implications of jail breaks extend beyond the immediate escape of individuals from custody. They pose significant challenges to law enforcement and correctional systems worldwide. High-profile jail breaks can undermine public confidence in the justice system and highlight vulnerabilities within security infrastructures (Afuzie, 2022). Moreover, when organized groups successfully execute a jail break, it can lead to an increase in criminal activity as freed individuals may return to their previous networks or engage in further violence. Additionally, the phenomenon raises questions about the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs within correctional facilities. If inmates feel compelled to escape rather than serve their sentences, it suggests deeper issues related to incarceration conditions and societal reintegration processes (Oye&Inuwa, 2015).

Globally, there is no society without a correctional service. According to Shajobi-Ibikunle (2014), correctional centers have existed in different civilizations in ancient times. It included short-term detention facilities for the confinement of persons awaiting trial, sentencing, execution, deportation (transportation to other countries as punishment) whipping or some other forms of corporal punishment. (Reid, 2012). However, placing offenders in an institution for the purposes of punishment is a relatively modern development. Correctional Centers have been described as the narrow funnel of criminal justice system to which sentences continually pour new offenders (Bamgbose, 2003). It is perceived to be the darkest region of the apparatus of the justice system in Nigeria (Dambazu, 2007).

The origin of Western correctional centers in Nigeria is traceable to the colonial regime in 1861 during the time their administration was pre-occupied with the bane of safeguarding their businesses and to protect the missionaries (Abiodun. Akinlade. Onyi&Daramola, 2021). By 1861, the then Acting Governor of Lagos Colony who was also a British merchant in Lagos, put a Police Force of about 25 constables in place; followed in 1863 by the establishment of four (4) courts which included: a Police Court meant to resolve minor disputes, a Criminal Court meant to try more serious cases, a Slave Court meant to try cases arising from the efforts to abolish the trade in slaves, as well as a Commercial Court meant to resolve disputes arising among the colonial merchants and traders (Nigeria Correctional Centers Service, 2018). It is no more a new knowledge that a Correctional Centre is built to take custody of legally detained people, towards identifying causes of their ill-behaviors, as well as retraining them to become more functional in the society (Orakwe, 2018). Put differently, the existence of Correctional Centre in a state is meant to punish, deter and reform convicted criminals.

However, effectiveness and efficiency of Nigerian Correctional Services have thus been under criticism largely because of constant jail breaks that have become a daily occurrence and the crime rates and increasing level of insecurity (Njoku, 2016; Folarin, 2017; Abiodun, et al 2021). Amid mounting insecurity challenges, the Federal Government appears to have yet another bout of headache to contend with as the nation's correctional facilities frequently come under violent attacks leading to jail breaks and attempted jail breaks. The situation across the country is such that inmates have become more restless, resulting in frequent jail break attempts and many wonder how much outside help inmates are able to garner despite being locked up in any of the correctional centres. It is against this background that this study examines the strategies for preventing jail breaks in correctional centers in Southeast, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For the past two decades now, the Nigerian correctional centres across the states have witnessed one form of jail or Correctional Centre breaks or the other (Ripples Nigeria Report, 2017). Sadly, various Correctional Centre breaks have taken place at the Correctional Centers in: Kogi, Ekiti, Ondo, Minna, Bauchi, Damaturu, Enugu, Owerri, among others in Nigeria. However, despite the various forewarning signals, correctional officers have usually been caught up in one Correctional Centre break or the other in the country; as the inmates broke loose after the expiration of the

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ultimatum and forewarning rolled out to the Service by the hoodlums (Ripples Nigeria Report, 2017).

In what has become a regular occurrence, the Medium-Security Custodial Centre of the Nigeria Correctional Service, in Abolongo, Oyo State, on Friday, October 22, 2021; experienced the nightmare of unknown gunmen who set Correctional Centre captives free. The attackers gained access to the Awaiting Trial Section of the facility by blasting the wall with several sticks of dynamite after a shootout with the security agencies guarding it. Eight hundred and thirty-seven inmates regained their freedom in the first instance (The Cable News Report, 2021). There were also speculations that the Fulani warlord, IskiluWakili and Akinyele serial killer, Sunday Shodipe, escaped in that event. Since 2010, we have had more than 6,651 escapees in approximately fourteen jail breaks. In 2020, we had three such jail breaks and two away from equalizing the 2014 record of five jail breaks. Curiously, more than 70% of Correctional Centre escapees from such jail breaks achieved their illegal freedom in the past year. However, 44% of the escapees' size (excluding consequent recaptures) took place in 2021 in just three episodes and consequently dwarfs the 12% in the five of such events in 2014 (Ripples Nigeria Report, 2022). On August 9, 2016, 15 inmates at the Nsukka Correctional Centre in Enugu State broke out of their cells and escaped (Afuzie, 2022).

According to Afuzie (2022), there have been reports of inmates spending longer time in Correctional Centre Awaiting Trial Section. Meanwhile, many of the fleeing inmates are still at large despite Correctional Centre authorities releasing their passports to the public seeking information regarding their whereabouts. Ebonyi State Command of the Nigeria Correctional Service, and its officials foiled an attempt by hoodlums to attack the Medium Security Custodian Centre, Abakaliki in October 2020. However, it is noteworthy that apart from the Medium Security Custodian Centre, Abakaliki that was repelled after a gun duel with the hoodlums which resulted in the death of one person, most of these seemed to have occurred with less than the required proportionate level of resistance from the security of the correctional services. Most jailbreaks are physical, usually involving an overwhelming horde of attackers with weapons and explosives (Afuzie, 2022). The attacks on the custodial centers and other parts have raised security concerns in many quarters especially Southeastern Nigeria as to how fortified custodial facilities in the country are.

According to Ezech and Umeoji (2018), huge budgetary allocations have been made and billions have been spent by the agency, the situation and plight of Nigerian inmates have continued to remain a

topic of discussion as almost all the custodial centers are overcrowded, poorly ventilated and unsanitized with dilapidated structures, while the inmates are poorly fed. According to Ejiofor and Afunanya, (2022), media reports, indicate that the sum of N4 billion was allocated in 2015; N14 billion in 2016; N16.6 billion in 2017; while higher allocations were made in 2018 and 2019, with each year having over 70% recurrent expenditure. In June 2018, the House of Representatives expressed displeasure at the state of the custodial centers and made attempt to probe a N613, 462,338,602 allocated to the agency in the last 10 years (2010-2019), noting that the Federal Government is spending N17 billion every year to feed inmates in 244 correctional centers but inmates still live in unconducive environment, a situation they said amounts to the violation of their human rights (Ezeh&Umeoji 2018). In October 19, 2020 During the ENDSARS protest, hoodlums broke into correctional facilities in Benin, Edo state. The height of national insecurity took place on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 when a group suspected to be “Boko Haram group invaded Kuje Correctional Center in FCT”. Available statistics show that the current administration has so far made the highest allocations to the Correctional Centre sector in the history of the agency, but the impact is yet to show as attacks leading to jail breaks and attempted jail breaks persist.

Many are of the view that these jail breaks may worsen if strict action is not taken, and this could add to the security challenges facing the country as some hardened criminals team up with kidnappers, terrorists and other criminal gangs. Currently, not less than 3,000 escaped inmates are already on the loose as the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS), formerly known as the Nigeria Prison Service (NPS), has continued to remain in the limelight as one of the most controversial government agencies in recent times due to the growing trend in jail breaks (Aluko&Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Afuzie, 2022). Despite the existence of these unhealthy situations, few studies have been conducted to determine the strategies for preventing jail breaks in correctional centers in South-East, Nigeria. In view of the problems, this study examines the strategies for preventing jail breaks in correctional centers in South-East, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

- 1) What are the strategies to be employed in preventing jail breaks in Correctional Centers in South-East, Nigeria?

- 2) Which group of people is in a better position to curb the incidence of jail breaks in Correctional Centers in South-East, Nigeria?
- 3) What type of punishment is suitable for instigators of jail breaks in Correctional Centers in South-East, Nigeria?

### **Review of Related Literature**

A study carried out by MaiBasira (2022) on reforming the security architecture focused on the rising prevailing factors that influence jail breaks in Nigeria and correctional inmates' safety. The mixed methods research design was employed with reliance on primary and secondary materials. Using a total of 376 respondents for the study; the researcher made use of SPSS in processing data collected from the field study. Findings of the study showed that safety of inmates and prosecution, correctional staff are in jeopardy. The study also found that most Correctional Centers are old with dilapidated structures and weak security. Correctional facilities are constitutional responsibilities of the Federal Government. The researcher identified the porous state of the Nigerian Correctional Centers and the Criminal Justice System. The study recommended that physical facilities of correctional centers should be put in proper shape.

Findings from Temitope et al (2021) on an investigation on the wave of incessant jail breaks in Southwest, Nigeria clearly indicate that Correctional Centre intelligence has significant efficacy on the correctional officers in secret security information collection. The study which adopted a mixed methods research design argued that the Correctional officers are re-jigged to gather information by always being vigilant, by reporting anything out of the ordinary and by forming professional working relationships with inmates with in-built trust and respect. For example: there should be at moderate level the issues about; overhearing a conversation; watching what inmates do; observing who inmates talk to-patterns of association; looking out for patterns of behavior and frequent actions; identifying unusual activity or predictors of disruptive behaviors; watching for physical changes; monitoring telephone calls and letters; observations during searching- hoarding of goods and clothes; and unusual requests or incidents.

Based on the findings of Aluko and Okolie-Osemene (2019), who investigated threat to Nigeria's internal security as occasioned by recurrence jail break, the study leveraged on synthesized

primary and secondary sources of data including key informant interviews and literature. It submitted that embarking on correctional centers reforms as an option for checkmating jail breaks as such would make correctional centers officials more accountable than what is presently obtainable. The study focused on inmate human rights and internal security but did not focus on Nigeria Security architecture and human security of which this study considers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research adopted two theories as its theoretical framework. They are regulatory capture theory and frustration aggression theory. The two theories have been adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because they are the most relevant, appropriate, suitable theories to explain the phenomenon of jail breaks in South-East, Nigeria.

The regulatory capture theory is associated with earlier works of Laureate economist George Stigler (1971) (Kenton, 2019; Dal Bó, 2006). Regulatory capture theory is a set of interrelated assumptions employed to explain and understand how regulatory agencies are captured by the regulated concerns or interests, thereby distorting the original intention of government for creating the agencies. When a special interest seizes regulatory agencies to further their own interest against the public interest for which they are established, the regulatory agencies are said to have been captured (Onuoha, 2008). Thus, a government agency suffering regulatory capture is called captured agency (Kenton, 2019). While all these are internal causes of jail break it would be pertinent to note that insurgency, proliferation of firearms, criminal activities, economic, political and social crisis have led to many jail breaks in recent times, and these are external to the correctional service.

In relation to the study, jail breaks occur in the Nigerian correctional facilities because of a failing counterinsurgency operations and intelligence failures which further reflect the individuality status of Nigeria security agencies. However, the case is such that most regulatory agencies are designed to represent a variety of constituents that includes both the public and the regulated. For instance, Peltzman (1976) argues the fact that agencies are public means that through a variety of procedures (such as hearings and investigations), public opinion will be considered or incorporated in the regulatory decision-making process. It has therefore been criticized that even

though the capture theory presents somewhat more pragmatic analysis of regulatory behaviour, critics still argue that it is one dimensional, revealing the problem of agency capture very much. He concludes that regulatory capture theory fails to consider the diversity of interests represented in the regulatory process.

The frustration-aggression theory as propounded by Fererabend, and Feirauben (1972), stipulates that aggression is because of frustration which results from an individual's inability to attain their goals. In furtherance of this theory, it is apparent that the narrow range of interest of the Nigerian bourgeoisie would always stand contrary to that of the exploited members of the society. In the light of this, it is only logical that the dominant class will not be favorably disposed to the emergence of anyone or group that may upset the power balance. Despite its roots in psychology, frustration-aggression theory has been used not only to study the behavior of individuals and small groups but also as a basis for macro level theories (Coleman, 1987) that explain aggression within societies (e.g., Berkowitz, 1968; Feierabend & Feierabend, 1966) or between them (e.g., de GaayFortman, 2005). In the book *Why Men Rebel*, Gurr (1970) argues that, both on an individual and a societal level, the repeated and prolonged experience of frustrations can lead to an outburst of aggression and violence. On the societal level, such frustrations can, for example, be characterized by severe economic recessions, a lack of or restricted access to resources, or systematic and/or institutional discrimination against certain groups. Feierabend and Feierabend (1966) have called this "systemic frustration" (p. 250). Such macro level applications of frustration-aggression theory to societies can also be understood through an evolutionary lens. Here, events or circumstances that interfere with hardwired biological goals such as survival or reproduction would be the most aversive and, hence, the ones with the most intense and far-reaching consequences.

Between individual behavior and societal processes, frustration-aggression theory has also been employed in explanatory models on a meso level. Most of this research have been carried out in the branch of organizational psychology that studies frustration and aggression at work (Fox & Spector, 1999) and it often refers to "organizational frustration" (Spector, 1978), which can be seen as the meso level equivalent of the systemic frustration that Feierabend and Feierabend (1966) have described.



In relation to the study, jail break is the product of aggressive behavior which results from issues such as congestion in correctional centers, dilapidated structure and state of the correctional centers sanitary conditions among others. Applying this to the study, jail break in correctional centers has resulted in death of both inmates and correctional officers, high wave of crime and insecurity issues in the host community where the correctional centers are located among others. Looking at the original definition by Dollard and colleagues, one might criticize their claim to universal validity. Taken verbatim, the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration suggests that aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration, and the assertion that frustration always leads to some form of aggression implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration. These deterministic assumptions were somewhat qualified in a 1941 publication by the same authors in which they stated that frustration produces instigation to aggression, but this is not the only type of instigation that it may produce (Miller, Sears, Mowrer, Doob, & Dollard, 1941, p. 339).

## **Methods**

The study adopted mixed methods research design. Mixed methods according to Nworgu (2016) is defined as a design for conducting research that involves collection, analyzing and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data. It involves administering of questionnaire and interviewing respondents. This research design was considered appropriate for this study because it enabled the collection of data relevant to the study from the target respondents which happens to be both inmates and correctional officers in Southeast, Nigeria. South-East was chosen because much study has not been conducted in this area as regards jail break prevention.

The study area was South- East Nigeria. The South-East geopolitical zone is made up of five states, namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States with eighty-five Local Government Areas (LGAs) and a population of over twenty million people dwelling in over ten commercial cities and large towns. The population of the study comprised of inmates and correctional officers at the selected Correctional Centers in South-East zone and the total population of inmates in these Correctional Centers is about 7444 in South-East zone according to the Correctional Centre Service in the South-East zone, at present. Documents from the Nigerian Correctional Centre

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Service showed the statistical representation of inmates in South East, Nigeria Correctional Centers: Abia: 1,434, Anambra: 1,534, Ebonyi: 934, Enugu: 1,434, Imo: 2,104. Statistical representation according to their gender; males: 6,934 and females: 510. The population of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) personnel in Southeast, Nigeria is 2,434 (Nigerian Correctional Service, NCoS, 2021). The total population is 9,878 while the sample size is 999. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1967) formula. This study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Using multi-stage sampling procedure, systematic sampling and simple random sampling techniques of probability sampling method and purposive sampling technique of non-probability method were used to select the respondents in the study. In the first stage, using the simple random sampling technique, the correctional centers located in the South East, Nigeria were numbered into five (5) sections according to their state namely; Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security) Aba and Federal Correctional Centre Umuahia, in Abia State, Federal Correctional Centre Awka and Federal Correctional Centre Onitsha in Anambra State, Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security) and Abakiliki, Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security), Afikpo in Ebonyi State, Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security), Nsukka, and the *Enugu Maximum Security Correctional Centre in Enugu State* and Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security), Orreh Farm, Federal Correctional Centre (Medium Security), Owerri in Imo State.

In the second stage, the names of the correctional centers were written in pieces of paper, folded and placed in a bowl. Three correctional centers were selected using the simple random sampling technique. They include Federal Correctional Centre, Enugu, Federal Correctional Centre, Awka and Federal Correctional Centre, Okigwe. Finally, 333 copies of questionnaire were administered

in each of the selected correctional centers, bringing the total number of administered copies of questionnaire to 999.

Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the respondents for the qualitative aspect of the study based on their knowledge of the theme of the study. 20 participants were selected for the In-Depth Interview (IDI). The selected individuals included: 10 correctional officers (5 males and 5 females) and 10 inmates (5 males and 5 females). The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software application. They were presented, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, such as simple percentages, frequency tables and graphic illustrations like bar charts, pie charts, histogram, box, plots etc. However, the qualitative data were analysed using thematic method of content analysis.

## **Findings/Results**

### **Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

For this study, 999 copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher with the help of the research assistants. Only 943 (94.4%) copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and returned. The remaining copies of questionnaire were either incorrectly filled or lost in field study. The analysis for this study was consequently done with the 943 correctly filled questionnaire.

This sub-section dealt with the analysis of socio-demographic data of respondents such as gender, age, marital status, education, religion and occupation.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
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<b>Gender</b>		
Male	655	69.5
Female	288	30.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18-28	94	10.0
29-39	567	60.1
40-50	188	19.9
51 and above	94	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	753	79.9
Married	182	19.3
Separated	5	0.5
Divorced	3	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>		
FSLC	95	10.1
SSCE/GCE	284	30.1
OND/NCE	94	10.0
B.Sc./HND	443	47.0
M.Sc./Ph.D.	27	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
African Traditional Religion	24	2.6
Christianity	912	96.7
Islam	7	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Status/Position</b>		
Correction Officer	162	17.1
Awaiting Trial	547	58.1
Convicted	234	24.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100</b>

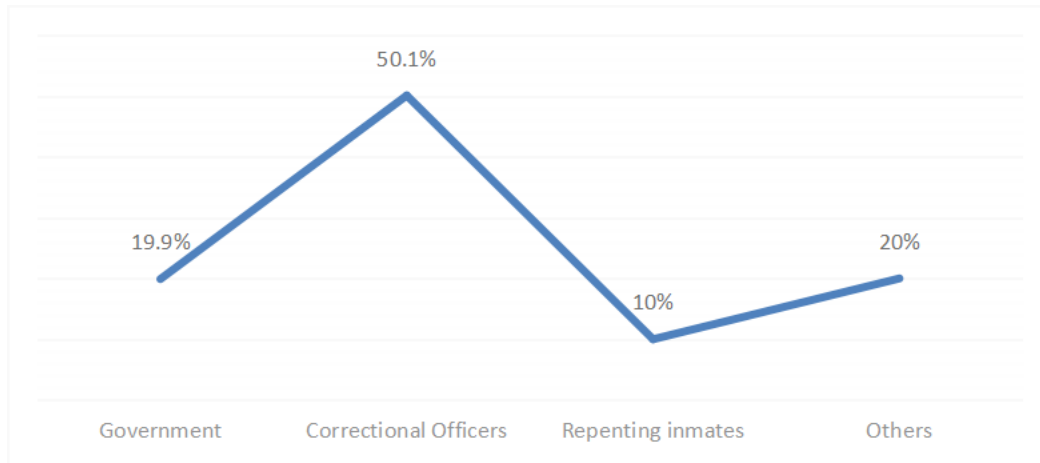
### Field Survey, 2024

According to Table 1 above, 69.5% of the respondents are males while 30.5% are females. This is not surprising as correctional centers usually have more male officers and inmates than females. Also, 10% of the respondents were aged 18-28 years, 60.1% were aged 29-39 years, 19.9% were aged 40-50 years, while 10% were aged 51 years and above. This implies that there is a robust youthful population both as inmates and officers in correctional centers. In terms of marital status, 79.9% are single, 19.3% are married, 0.5% are separated,

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while 0.3% are divorced. This is not surprising as many of the respondents were relatively young and were not married at the time of the study. In terms of educational attainment, 10.1% had FSLC as their highest educational qualification, 30.1% had SSCE/GCE, 10% had OND/NCE, 47% had B.Sc./HND, while 2.8% had M.Sc. /Ph.D. This implies that almost half of the respondents are graduates. In the aspect of religion, 2.6% of the respondents are adherents of the African Traditional Religion, 96.7% are Christians, while 0.7% are Muslims. This finding is not out of place since the study was carried out in South-East, Nigeria which is dominated by Christians. In terms of their status or position in the prison, 17.1% of the respondents are Correction Officers, 58.1% are awaiting trial, while 24.8% have been convicted. This implies that most of the respondents were inmates.

The data presented in Fig. 1 reveal a significant consensus among respondents regarding the prevention of jailbreaks in correctional centers. With 90.8% of the respondents affirming that they believe jail breaks can be prevented, it indicates a strong belief in the potential for effective measures and strategies to mitigate this issue. On the other hand, 9.2% of the respondents expressed skepticism about the possibility of preventing jail breaks. This minority viewpoint may stem from various factors, including perceptions of systemic flaws within the correctional system, inadequate resources allocated for security measures, or historical instances where jail breaks have occurred despite existing protocols.



### **Respondents' views on whether jail breaks in correctional centres can be prevented**

#### **Field Survey, 2024**

#### **Respondents' views on the group that is in a better condition to curb the incidence of jailbreaks**

The data presented in Figure 2 illustrate the views of respondents regarding the group that is best positioned to mitigate the occurrence of jailbreaks. The responses indicate a clear preference for correctional officers, with 50.1% of the respondents believing that they are the most capable group in addressing this issue. This suggests a recognition of the critical role that correctional staff play in maintaining security and order within correctional facilities. In contrast, 19.9% of the respondents believe that the government is better suited to tackle jail breaks. Furthermore, 10% of respondents feel that repentant inmates can significantly influence the reduction of jail break incidents. Lastly, 20% of the respondents selected others, which encompasses various perspectives not explicitly represented by the other categories, including community organizations. This finding is corroborated by the submission of an IDI participant:

Our training and daily responsibilities equip us with unique skills and insights that are vital in preventing escapes. The environment within correctional facilities is complex, and we are at the forefront of maintaining security and order. Our primary duty is to ensure the safety of both inmates and staff, which inherently includes implementing measures to prevent jail breaks. One key aspect of our capability lies in our comprehensive training programmes. These programmes not only cover physical security measures but also emphasize behavioral analysis and crisis management. We learn to recognize signs of potential unrest or escape plans among inmates, which can often be subtle. This proactive approach allows us to intervene before situations escalate into actual attempts at escape. Moreover, we are trained in emergency response protocols, which are essential when dealing with any incidents that may arise during an attempted jail break. Additionally, our daily interactions with inmates provide us with valuable insights into their behaviours and motivations. Building rapport can sometimes deter negative actions; inmates who feel respected may be less likely to engage in escape attempts. We also work closely with mental health professionals and other staff members to identify individuals who may be at risk of attempting to escape due to psychological distress or other factors. This collaborative effort enhances our ability to manage potential threats effectively (Male, 50 years, Married, Correction Officer, .Federal Correctional Center, Enugu).

Another IDI participant had a different opinion though

Many people outside these walls may not fully understand what life is like inside a prison. It's not just about punishment; it's also about rehabilitation and preparing individuals to reintegrate into society. When inmates are treated with dignity and respect, it fosters an environment where they can reflect on their actions and work towards personal growth. Unfortunately, prisons lack the necessary resources to provide adequate mental health support, educational programmes, or vocational training. This neglect can lead to feelings of hopelessness among inmates, which ultimately contributes to jail breaks. Also, the Correctional Services facilities are outdated and overcrowded, which worsens tensions among inmates and staff alike. When there isn't enough space for everyone, it creates an environment ripe for conflict. Improving infrastructure such as upgrading living conditions, ensuring proper sanitation, and providing sufficient recreational areas can significantly reduce

stress levels among inmates. This improvement would not only enhance our day-to-day lives but also contribute to a safer environment for everyone involved. A well-maintained facility with adequate resources can help prevent jailbreaks by addressing some of the root causes of unrest within the prison system (Male, 38 years, Single, Awaiting Trial Inmate, Federal Correctional Centre, Okigwe).

**Table 1: Respondents’ views on measures that can be employed to curb the incidence of jail break**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Granting amnesty	82	8.7
Improvement of infrastructure	547	58.0
Improving logistic system	139	14.7
Capacity building for Correctional Officers	51	5.4
Computerized data management	39	4.1
Occasional review of cases of those that are still 1 awaiting trial		0.1
All of the above	84	8.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Field Survey, 2024**

The data presented in Table 1 reflect the respondents’ views on various measures that could be implemented to reduce the incidence of jail breaks. The data show that 58% of the respondents indicated that infrastructure should be improved. This suggests that many respondents believe that enhancing the physical conditions and security features of correctional facilities is crucial for preventing escapes. Following infrastructure improvements, the next most supported measure is improving the logistic system, which received 14.7% of responses. This indicates that respondents see value in optimizing how resources are allocated and managed within correctional facilities. A well-organized logistic system could ensure that personnel are adequately deployed and that security protocols are effectively enforced, thereby reducing opportunities for jail breaks. Granting amnesty was supported by 8.7% of respondents, suggesting a belief among some individuals that offering leniency or reduced sentences could alleviate overcrowding and tensions within Correctional Centers, potentially leading to fewer escape attempts. Capacity building for



correctional officers, 5.4%, computerized data management, 4.1%, and occasional review of cases for those awaiting trial, 0.1% received significantly lower response from respondents. Capacity building emphasizes the need for training and professional development among correctional staff to enhance their skills in managing inmates effectively. Computerized data management highlights the importance of modern technology in tracking inmate information and movements; however, it appears less prioritized compared to other measures. Lastly, only 0.1% of respondents advocated for an occasional review of cases for those awaiting trial as a means to curb jail breaks, indicating that this option is not widely viewed as effective or relevant in addressing the issue at hand.

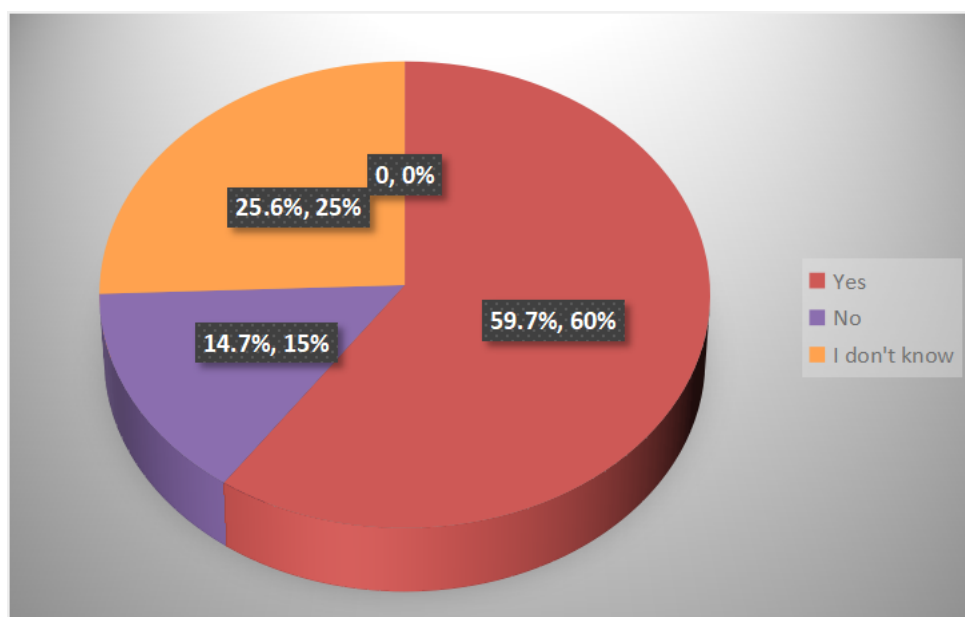
**Table 2: Respondents’ views on the measures that can be used to discourage inmates from getting involved in planned jail breaks**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Enlighten them on the consequences of the actions	629	66.7
Provision of positive supportive social environment	9	1.0
Provision of healthcare and psychological help to inmates	12	1.3
Providing adequate support services for those on awaiting 8 trials	8	0.8
Schedule counselling time	6	0.6
Other	279	29.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Field Survey, 2024**

The data presented in Table 2 reflect the perspectives of respondents regarding measures that could effectively discourage inmates from engaging in planned jailbreaks. The responses indicate a significant emphasis on the importance of education and awareness concerning the consequences of criminal actions, as evidenced by 66.7% of the respondents advocating for enlightenment on these repercussions. This suggests a belief that informing inmates about the potential outcomes of their decisions may deter them from pursuing escape plans. Only 1% of the respondents suggested providing a positive supportive social environment as a deterrent. Similarly, healthcare and psychological support garnered just

1.3% while adequate support services for those awaiting trial received 0.8%. These figures suggest that while there is recognition of the importance of mental health and support systems within correctional facilities, they are not viewed as primary deterrents against jail breaks. Counselling services were also minimally endorsed, with only 0.6% advocating for scheduled counselling time as a measure to prevent jail breaks. Interestingly, 29.6% of the respondents selected other, which implies that there are alternative strategies or ideas not captured by the predefined categories in this survey. This openness to additional measures suggests a that preventing jail breaks may require innovative approaches beyond traditional methods.



### Field Survey, 2024

**Fig 3: Respondents' views on whether instigators of planned jail breaks should be punished**

The data presented in Fig. 3 reflect the opinions of respondents regarding whether individuals who instigate planned jail breaks should face punishment. It shows that 59.7% of the respondents expressed a clear stance in favour of punishing these instigators. This indicates a prevailing belief that those who orchestrate such criminal activities should be held accountable for their actions. Conversely, only 14.7% of the respondents opposed the idea of punishing instigators, suggesting that a minority holds a more lenient view on

accountability in this context. Additionally, 25.6% of the respondents indicated that they did not know whether instigators of jail breaks should be punished.

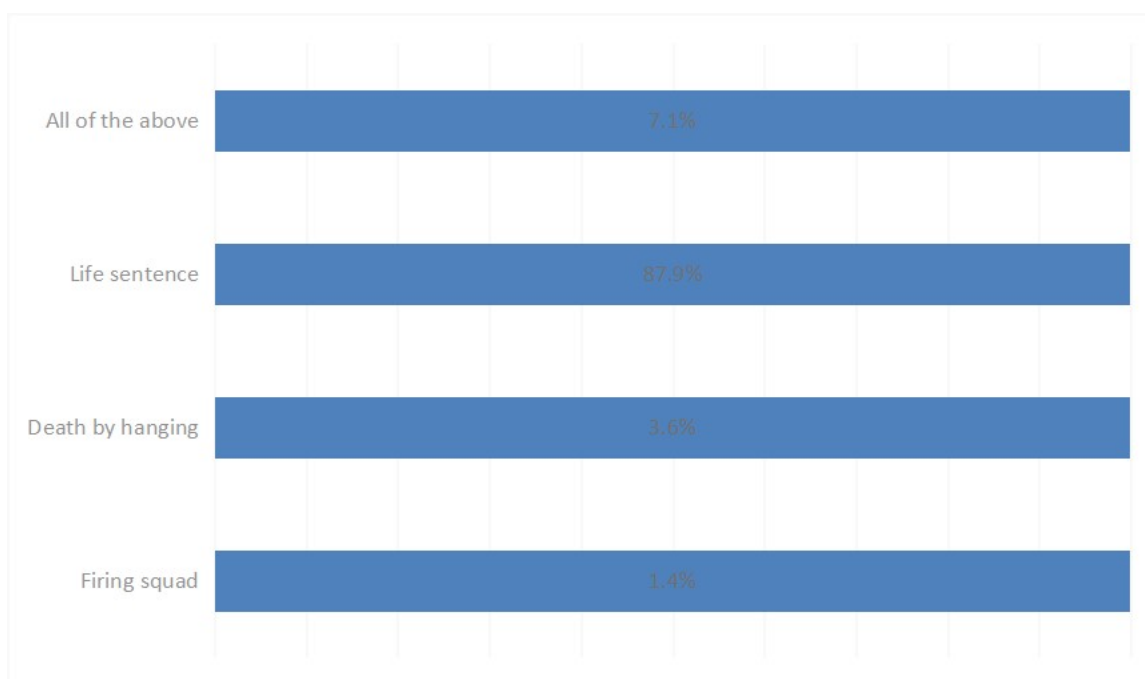
According to an IDI participant:

One of the most serious issues we face is the planning and execution of jailbreaks by inmates. It is my firm belief that when inmates are caught attempting to orchestrate a jail break, they should face serious punishment. This stance is not merely about retribution; it is fundamentally about deterrence and maintaining order within our facilities. The rationale behind punishing inmates who plan jail breaks stems from the need to uphold security protocols. Correctional facilities are designed to be secure environments where individuals serve their sentences while also being rehabilitated. When an inmate engages in planning an escape, it undermines the entire structure of the correctional system. Such actions can lead to chaos not only within the correctional center but also pose risks to public safety if these individuals manage to escape. Therefore, imposing strict penalties serves as a clear message that such behaviour will not be tolerated. Moreover, punishment acts as a deterrent for other inmates who might consider similar actions. The prison environment is often one where individuals observe and learn from each other's behaviours. If inmates see that those who attempt escapes face severe consequences like extended sentences, loss of privileges, or even solitary confinement, they may think twice before engaging in similar plans themselves. This creates a safer environment for both staff and inmates alike, as it discourages disruptive behaviour that could lead to violence or further criminal activity (Male, 46 years, Married, Correctional Officer, Federal Correctional Centre, Enugu).

According to another IDI participant:

Punishing those who plan jail breaks reinforces the authority of correctional officers and the justice system. It sends a strong signal that our institutions are not weak or easily manipulated; rather, they are places where rules are enforced strictly and fairly. This enforcement helps maintain respect for the law among inmates, which is crucial for rehabilitation efforts. When inmates understand that there are real consequences for their actions, they may be more inclined to engage positively with rehabilitation programmes instead of resorting to criminal plots.

Furthermore, it's important to consider the broader implications of allowing jail break attempts to go unpunished. If we were to adopt a lenient approach towards such serious offences, it could lead to an erosion of discipline within correctional facilities. Inmates might feel emboldened to challenge authority or engage in other forms of misconduct if they perceive that there are no significant repercussions for their actions. This could create an environment rife with instability and conflict, making it increasingly difficult for correctional officers to perform their duties effectively (Male, 44 years, Married, Correctional Officer, Federal Correctional Centre, Awka).



### Field Survey, 2024

**Fig 4: Respondents' views on the punishment suitable for the instigators of planned jail break**

The data presented in Fig. 4 reflect the respondents' views on the appropriate punishment for instigators of a planned jail break, revealing a significant preference for life sentences over other forms of punishment. It shows that 87.9% of the respondents advocate for a life sentence, indicating a strong inclination towards long-term incarceration. In contrast, only a small fraction of the respondents supports more severe punitive measures such as

execution by firing squad, 1.4% or hanging, 3.6%. This suggests that there is minimal public support for capital punishment in this context, which may reflect broader trends in contemporary society where there is increasing scrutiny and opposition to the death penalty due to concerns about its morality, effectiveness as a deterrent, and potential for wrongful convictions. Additionally, 7.1% of respondents answered all the above. This could imply that these individuals might view the severity of the crime as warranting serious consequences but remain uncertain about endorsing capital punishment outright.

## Discussion

The findings from the respondents indicated that infrastructure should be improved. This suggests that many respondents believe that enhancing the physical conditions and security features of correctional facilities is crucial for preventing escapes. Following infrastructure improvements, the next most supported measure is improving the logistic system. This indicates that respondents see value in optimizing how resources are allocated and managed within correctional facilities. A well-organized logistic system could ensure that personnel are adequately deployed and that security protocols are effectively enforced, thereby reducing opportunities for jail breaks. Granting amnesty was supported by few respondents, suggesting a belief among some individuals that offering leniency or reduced sentences could alleviate overcrowding and tensions within prisons, potentially leading to fewer escape attempts. Computerized data management highlights the importance of modern technology in tracking inmate information and movements; however, it appears less prioritized compared to other measures. Lastly, only few of respondents advocated for an occasional review of cases for those awaiting trial to curb jailbreaks, indicating that this option is not widely viewed as effective or relevant in addressing the issue at hand.

This finding is relational with Aluko and Okolie-Osemene (2019), who submitted that embarking on correctional centres reforms as an option for checkmating jailbreaks as such would make correctional centres officials more accountable than what is presently obtainable. Findings from Temitope et al (2021) on an investigation on the wave of

incessant jail break in Southwest, Nigeria clearly indicate that Correctional Centre intelligence has significant efficacy on the Correctional Officers in secret security information collection. Capacity building for correctional officers was part of the major factors, computerized data management, and occasional review of cases for those awaiting trial. Capacity building emphasizes the need for training and professional development among correctional staff to enhance their skills in managing inmates effectively. This should be done to avoid moral decadence among correctional officers, as captured in the regulatory capture theory.

## **Conclusion**

Jail breaks is a serious issue that reflects broader systemic challenges within the Nigerian criminal justice system. The alarming frequency of these escapes not only underscores the inadequacies in Correctional Services infrastructure and security measures but also highlights the socio-economic conditions that contribute to criminal behaviour and recidivism. Inadequate funding, overcrowding, and poor living conditions within correctional facilities create an environment ripe for unrest and desperation among inmates. Furthermore, the lack of rehabilitation programs exacerbates the situation, as individuals who are not given opportunities for personal development or reintegration into society are more likely to resort to escape as a means of survival or a return to freedom. Moreover, the socio-political landscape in Nigeria plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of prison escapes.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- 1) One significant step towards curbing jail breaks is improving Correctional Services conditions and infrastructure. Many correctional facilities in Nigeria are overcrowded and under-resourced which creates an environment conducive to unrest and escape attempts.

- 2) Investing in Correctional Services facilities to ensure they meet international standards for safety and human rights, authorities can reduce the likelihood of jail breaks.
- 3) Providing adequate staffing levels, training for correctional officers, and ensuring that inmates have access to basic needs such as food, healthcare and education can help prevent incidences of jail break in Nigeria.
- 4) Implementing modern surveillance technologies can help monitor inmate activities more effectively and deter escape attempts.
- 5) Another critical aspect is addressing corruption within the criminal justice system. Corruption can undermine efforts to maintain order within Correctional Centers and facilitate escapes. Strengthening accountability mechanisms for law enforcement officials and correctional officers is vital. This could involve establishing independent oversight bodies to investigate allegations of corruption or misconduct within the correctional system.
- 6) Additionally, promoting transparency through public reporting on conditions in correctional centers and inmate treatment can help build trust between communities and law enforcement agencies.

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