

Recidivism as a Major Cause of Criminal Subculture in Nigerian Correctional Centers: A Study of Aba Maximum Correctional Center

Emmanuel Ugochukwu Nwakanma¹ and Ijeoma Mercy Ogba-Amaugo^{2*}

¹Department of Sociology Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.

²Department of Sociology Abia State University Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author Email: e.nwakanma@yahoo.com; ijeoma.amaugo@abiastateuniversity.edu.ng

Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies



Vol. 14(2), Pp. 195-213, July 2026,

Author(s) retains the copyright of this article

This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0.

<https://journals.directresearchpublisher.org/index.php/drjses>; <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/drjses>

Research Article
ISSN: 2449-0806

Received 19 May 2026, Accepted 30 June, 2026 Published 19 July 2026

ABSTRACT

Recidivism has become a persistent challenge that undermines the rehabilitative mandate of Nigerian correctional centers by facilitating the development and perpetuation of criminal subcultures. This study examined recidivism as a major driver of criminal subculture in the Aba Maximum Correctional Center, Nigeria. Guided by Edmund Husserl's phenomenological perspective, the study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design. Twenty correctional officers were purposively selected from a population of 38 officers. The participants comprised 15 (75%) males and 5 (25%) females; 17 (85%) were married, while 10 (50%) were aged 31–40 years. Half of the participants had between 6 and 10 years of correctional service, and administrative staff constituted the largest occupational category (40%). Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. To ensure data credibility, interview transcripts were systematically verified through written-audio reconciliation prior to analysis, correcting transcription inconsistencies and ensuring fidelity to participants' accounts. The validated data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. The findings revealed that repeated incarceration normalizes criminal lifestyles through the transfer of criminal skills, deviant socialization, and the reinforcement of informal prison hierarchies. Recidivists were found to mentor newly admitted inmates, control illicit prison economies, and strengthen criminal identities within the correctional environment. Inadequate post-release support, unemployment, community rejection, and societal stigmatization further increased the likelihood of repeated offending, while overcrowding and resource scarcity encouraged dependence on inmate subcultures for protection and access to limited resources. The study concludes that recidivism functions as a structural mechanism through which criminal subcultures are reproduced and sustained within Nigerian correctional centers. It recommends comprehensive rehabilitation programmers, improved custodial conditions, reduced overcrowding, strengthened post-release reintegration services, and community-based support initiatives to reduce recidivism and disrupt the transmission of criminal subcultures.

Keywords: Recidivism; Criminal subculture; Nigerian Correctional Service; Phenomenology; Rehabilitation; Reintegration



Citation: Nwakanma, E.U & Ogba-Amaugo, I. M. (2026). Recidivism as a Major Cause of Criminal Subculture in Nigerian Correctional Centers: A Study of Aba Maximum Correctional Center. *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*, 14(2): 195-213.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/drjses.v14i2.10>

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of correctional institutions globally is to reform offenders and facilitate their successful reintegration into society, thereby reducing the likelihood of reoffending (recidivism) and enhancing public safety

(Ajah, 2018). However, this ideal is frequently challenged by complex realities, particularly in developing nations such as Nigeria. Despite their theoretical objectives, correctional facilities often become environments where

Official Publication of Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies. Vol. 14, 2026, ISSN: 2449-0806

criminal behaviors are reinforced, and distinct criminal subcultures emerge and thrive, thereby contributing significantly to the problem of recidivism. Recidivism, defined as the tendency of a convicted offender to reoffend after serving a sentence, remains a persistent and formidable challenge for criminal justice systems worldwide (Rakis, 2005). In Nigeria, the problem is particularly pronounced. Early studies by Soyombo (2009) reported a recidivism rate of 37.3% in 2005, which increased to 52.4% in 2010 (Abrifor et al., 2012). More recent evidence indicates that over 60% of inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centers are recidivists, highlighting a significant failure in the rehabilitative and reformatory functions of these institutions (Obioha, 1995; Chukwumerije, 2012). This upward trend suggests that, despite various correctional interventions, recidivism continues to increase, posing one of the most persistent social and criminal justice challenges of the twenty-first century. The high rate of recidivism in Nigeria is driven by multiple, interrelated factors. Existing studies consistently identify inadequate post-release support, limited aftercare services, social stigma, discrimination against ex-offenders, and persistent unemployment as major contributors to repeated offending (Obioha, 1995; Omoruyi & Agbontaen, 2025). Following release, many ex-convicts encounter significant barriers to securing gainful employment due to limited vocational skills, inadequate educational qualifications, and the absence of marketable certifications. These challenges often leave them with few legitimate means of livelihood, increasing their vulnerability to re-engaging in criminal activities. Omoruyi and Agbontaen (2025) further argue that weak rehabilitation programmers and inadequate reintegration support exacerbate post-release difficulties, thereby significantly increasing the likelihood of recidivism.

Conditions within Nigerian correctional centers further compound this problem. These facilities are frequently characterized by severe overcrowding, dilapidated infrastructure, inadequate healthcare services, and limited access to educational and vocational training programmers (Adonis & Abbey, 2024). For example, as of April 2025, approximately 67% of Nigeria's prison population comprised awaiting-trial inmates, a situation that has significantly contributed to persistent congestion (Premium Times, 2025). Overcrowding not only undermines inmates' fundamental human rights but also weakens rehabilitation efforts by restricting access to meaningful correctional programmers and increasing pressure on already scarce institutional resources (Adikwu, 2025). Consequently, correctional centers often provide an environment conducive to the emergence and persistence of criminal subcultures. Criminal subcultures, commonly manifested through informal prison gangs and inmate networks, function as alternative social systems within correctional facilities (Ajah, 2018; Okoza et al., 2019). These subcultures provide inmates with identity, protection, social support, and coping mechanisms for navigating the harsh realities of incarceration (Adetula,

Adetula, & Fatusin, 2010). However, they simultaneously undermine the rehabilitative goals of correctional institutions by reinforcing criminal identities, facilitating the transmission of criminal knowledge and skills, and challenging formal institutional authority (Benjamin, 2018). Recidivists, owing to their repeated exposure to the correctional environment, often become "prison-wise," possessing extensive knowledge of prison culture, criminal practices, and informal inmate hierarchies. They also develop criminal networks that extend beyond prison walls, positioning them as influential agents in the creation, maintenance, and transmission of criminal subcultures (Obioha, 1995; Adetula et al., 2010).

These dynamic transforms correctional centers into what has been described as "schools for criminals" rather than institutions of rehabilitation, particularly for first-time offenders who are exposed to experienced and hardened inmates (Adetula et al., 2010). The relationship between recidivism and criminal subcultures is therefore cyclical and mutually reinforcing. Each episode of re-incarceration further embeds offenders within criminal subcultures, strengthens criminal identities, expands criminal networks, and diminishes the prospects for successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Benjamin, 2018). This persistent cycle raises important concerns regarding the effectiveness of the Nigerian correctional system and its capacity to fulfil its rehabilitative mandate.

Against this background, the present study investigates the relationship between recidivism and criminal subculture within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center, Nigeria. Although previous studies have examined prison overcrowding (Adikwu, 2025), recidivism (Obioha, 1995; Chukwumerije, 2012), and prison gangs (Ajah, 2018), limited empirical attention has been devoted to explaining the mechanisms through which recidivism facilitates the formation and strengthening of criminal subcultures within specific Nigerian correctional facilities. Furthermore, few qualitative studies have explored the lived experiences and perspectives of correctional officers regarding how repeated incarceration reproduces deviant social structures within prisons. By adopting a phenomenological approach, this study addresses this gap by providing a context-specific and empirically grounded understanding of how recidivism contributes to the reproduction and persistence of criminal subcultures in the Aba Maximum Correctional Center.

Conceptualization

Concept of Recidivism

Recidivism remains one of the most significant indicators of the inability of correctional institutions to achieve their fundamental objective of offender rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. Although correctional centers are established to punish offenders while equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and behavioral changes necessary for lawful living after release, the

continued return of former inmates to criminal activities highlights persistent deficiencies in rehabilitation programmers, correctional practices, and reintegration mechanisms. Consequently, recidivism has become a central concern in criminology, correctional administration, and criminal justice policy because it reflects not only institutional shortcomings but also broader societal failures in supporting the successful reintegration of ex-offenders.

The concept of recidivism generally refers to the repeated involvement of an individual in criminal behavior after receiving punishment or completing a correctional sentence. It includes re-arrest, reconviction, re-incarceration, or the commission of new criminal offences following release from custody. Modern criminologists emphasize that recidivism is not merely an individual behavioral problem but a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by institutional conditions, socio-economic circumstances, psychological factors, family support, community acceptance, and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmers. According to Abubakar and UH (2025), recidivism represents the repeated commission of criminal offences by former inmates who have previously undergone correctional treatment. Their study in Kano State identified several institutional and social determinants of recidivism, including inadequate vocational training, unemployment, poor educational opportunities, weak family support systems, substance abuse, peer influence, and ineffective correctional programmers. The authors argue that unless correctional institutions adequately prepare inmates for lawful reintegration, former offenders are highly likely to relapse into criminal activities.

Similarly, Essoh, Asangaung and Peter (2025) conceptualize recidivism as a systemic failure of Nigeria's correctional philosophy, where the emphasis on punishment outweighs rehabilitation. According to the authors, institutional deficiencies such as overcrowded facilities, inadequate rehabilitation programmers, ineffective reintegration strategies, and limited post-release support significantly contribute to repeated offending. They further argue that societal stigma and unemployment create additional barriers that prevent ex-offenders from successfully reintegrating into society, thereby increasing the likelihood of reoffending. Supporting this position, Kofoworola and Mohammed (2025) examined rehabilitation programmers in Kuje Custodial Center and found that although rehabilitation initiatives exist, participation remains voluntary rather than compulsory. Their findings indicate that this voluntary approach reduces programmed effectiveness and contributes to a remarkably high recidivism rate among former inmates. Beyond institutional weaknesses, the study identified poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, and negative public perception as significant predictors of repeated criminal behavior. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized restorative justice as an alternative strategy for reducing recidivism. Isiaka et al. (2025) argue that restorative justice shifts correctional

philosophy from punitive incarceration to offender accountability, victim participation, reconciliation, and community reintegration. According to the authors, restorative justice promotes behavioral transformation by strengthening offenders' social bonds and reducing stigmatization, thereby lowering the likelihood of repeated criminal conduct.

Similarly, Adikwu (2025) contends that restorative justice provides sustainable solutions to criminal behavior by addressing the underlying social and economic causes of offending rather than merely imposing punishment. The author argues that counselling, vocational training, reconciliation, and economic empowerment collectively reduce the probability of recidivism and facilitate successful reintegration into society. From these perspectives, recidivism is conceptualized in this study as the repeated involvement of former inmates of Aba Maximum Correctional Center in criminal activities after release due to institutional inadequacies, ineffective rehabilitation, criminal socialization within correctional facilities, and limited reintegration opportunities within society.

Concept of Criminal Subculture

Criminal subculture refers to a social system within which individuals develop values, beliefs, norms, and behavioral patterns that differ significantly from those accepted by the larger society and that encourage criminal conduct. Within correctional institutions, inmates often establish informal groups governed by their own rules, leadership structures, communication patterns, and behavioral expectations. These informal social systems gradually influence newly admitted inmates, promoting criminal identities and reinforcing antisocial behaviors.

Unlike formal institutional regulations established by correctional authorities, criminal subcultures evolve informally among inmates through daily interactions, shared experiences, and collective resistance to institutional authority. These subcultures often reward criminal expertise, violence, manipulation, intimidation, gang affiliation, and opposition to correctional discipline. According to Ismaila, Umaru and Yusuf (2024), criminal subculture represents one of the greatest obstacles to inmate rehabilitation in Nigerian correctional facilities. Their investigation in selected correctional centers in Niger State revealed that inmates recreate social environments similar to criminal communities outside prison. These environments encourage behaviors such as violence, corruption, intimidation, illegal trading, gang activities, contraband circulation, and resistance to institutional regulations. The study further identified several institutional conditions responsible for strengthening criminal subcultures within correctional facilities, including overcrowding, rigid institutional rules, corruption among correctional officials, inadequate welfare facilities, poor living conditions, and the importation of criminal lifestyles into prison. According to the researchers, these conditions

encourage inmates to rely more heavily on fellow offenders than on correctional authorities, thereby strengthening criminal socialization. The persistence of criminal subculture creates an environment where experienced offenders become informal teachers for less experienced inmates. Through continuous interaction, newly admitted inmates acquire criminal knowledge, techniques, attitudes, and networks that persist after release. Consequently, rather than discouraging criminal behavior, correctional institutions may inadvertently facilitate the transmission of criminal values from one generation of offenders to another.

This understanding aligns with the observations of Essoh et al. (2025), who argue that institutional failures create favorable conditions for the emergence of criminal cultures within correctional facilities. Where rehabilitation programmes are inadequate, inmates increasingly rely on informal inmate structures for survival, protection, and identity formation, thereby strengthening criminal subcultures. For this study, criminal subculture refers to the network of criminal values, beliefs, behavioral norms, relationships, and informal organizational structures that develop among inmates within Aba Maximum Correctional Center and influence continued criminal behavior during and after incarceration.

Nigerian Correctional Centers

The Nigerian Correctional Service serves as the principal institution responsible for the custody, rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration of offenders. The enactment of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act of 2019 officially transformed the former Nigerian Prisons Service into a correctional institution with broader responsibilities extending beyond punishment. Modern correctional philosophy emphasizes behavioral modification through educational programmes, vocational training, psychological counselling, religious instruction, healthcare services, and social reintegration initiatives. However, practical implementation continues to face serious challenges including overcrowding, inadequate funding, shortage of qualified personnel, obsolete infrastructure, poor healthcare, and insufficient rehabilitation facilities.

According to Essoh et al. (2025), many Nigerian correctional centers remain largely punitive despite policy reforms aimed at rehabilitation. Institutional overcrowding, inadequate reintegration programmes, and weak post-release support significantly undermine correctional objectives and contribute to high recidivism. Similarly, Kofoworola and Mohammed (2025) observed that rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian custodial centers are often available but poorly implemented. Participation remains largely voluntary, resource allocation is inadequate, and vocational programmes frequently fail to equip inmates with employable skills necessary for successful reintegration. Furthermore, Isiaka et al. (2025) argue that the overreliance on custodial sentencing has contributed to overcrowding and diminished the

effectiveness of correctional services. The authors advocate for increased adoption of restorative justice mechanisms, particularly for minor offences, to reduce prison congestion and improve rehabilitation outcomes. Within the context of this study, Nigerian correctional centers are conceptualized as government institutions established for offender custody, behavioral modification, rehabilitation, and reintegration but whose operational limitations may inadvertently facilitate criminal subculture formation and increase recidivism.

Relationship between Recidivism and Criminal Subculture

The relationship between recidivism and criminal subculture has become increasingly recognized within contemporary correctional research. Criminal subculture develops within correctional institutions through prolonged interaction among offenders, while recidivism represents the continuation of criminal behavior after release. The two concepts are therefore mutually reinforcing. Within correctional facilities, inmates often learn new criminal skills, establish criminal networks, strengthen antisocial identities, and adopt values that normalize offending. These experiences increase the likelihood that released inmates will maintain criminal associations and subsequently reoffend. Ismaila et al. (2024) demonstrate that criminal subculture significantly undermines rehabilitation by encouraging inmates to maintain criminal identities rather than embrace behavioral transformation. Their findings indicate that corruption, inmate hierarchies, gang influence, and institutional deficiencies create environments where criminal learning flourishes. Similarly, Abubakar and UH (2025) argue that ineffective rehabilitation programmes combined with social and economic challenges increase the probability that former inmates will return to criminal networks acquired during incarceration.

According to Essoh et al. (2025), repeated offending contributes directly to declining public order because ex-offenders frequently re-engage with criminal groups and reinforce cycles of crime within society. Their findings suggest that institutional weaknesses within correctional facilities contribute simultaneously to criminal subculture development and recidivism. Ezeji (2025) emphasizes that criminal behavior is influenced by multiple interacting factors including peer influence, family dysfunction, substance abuse, poverty, discrimination, and inadequate institutional support. These factors interact with prison-based criminal subcultures to increase the likelihood of repeat offending among released inmates. Consequently, this study conceptualizes recidivism as both an outcome and a reinforcing mechanism of criminal subculture within Aba Maximum Correctional Center. The stronger the criminal subculture within the correctional environment, the greater the probability that inmates will adopt criminal values that persist after release, thereby increasing recidivism and perpetuating cycles of offending.

The Interplay between Recidivism and Criminal Subculture

The relationship between recidivism and criminal subculture within correctional settings is a deeply intertwined dynamic that significantly impedes the rehabilitative goals of prison systems globally, and particularly in Nigeria. Understanding this interplay is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies. This review explores existing scholarship on how these two phenomena influence each other. Criminal subcultures, often described as informal social systems within prisons, are characterized by their own rules, hierarchies, and values that frequently run counter to institutional norms (Ajah, 2018; Okoza et al., 2019). These subcultures provide a sense of belonging, protection, and status for inmates navigating the punitive and often deprived environment of incarceration (Sykes, 1958). The deprivation model (Sykes, 1958) suggests that these subcultures arise as adaptations to the inherent "pains of imprisonment," while the importation model (Goffman, 1968; Wright, 1994) posits that they are brought into the prison by individuals' pre-existing criminal identities and networks from outside. In the Nigerian context, the proliferation of these subcultures is exacerbated by systemic issues such as overcrowding and inadequate resources, which weaken formal control and allow informal inmate structures to thrive (Olabamiji, 2025). This environment facilitates the "brainwashing" of less experienced inmates by hardened criminals, transforming initial guilt into justifications for crime (Ikoh, 2011). These informal systems often foster illicit economies, propagate criminal skills, and undermine official authority, thereby reinforcing criminal identities (Benjamin, 2018; UNODC, 2022).

Recidivism, defined as a relapse into criminal behavior after previous sanctions or interventions is intrinsically linked to these subcultures. High rates of recidivism, exceeding 60% in Nigerian Correctional Centers (Obioha, 1995; Chukwumerije, 2012), suggest that incarceration often acts as a "revolving door," actively facilitating continued criminal engagement. Recidivists, due to their repeated exposure to the prison environment, become "prison-wise" and often serve as key purveyors of criminal subculture (Obioha, 1995; Adetula et al., 2010). They bring sophisticated criminal knowledge, established networks, and a deeper adherence to deviant norms, effectively strengthening and perpetuating these subcultures within the prison walls. The lack of robust post-release support mechanisms, including job placement and psychological counselling, further pushes ex-offenders back into familiar criminal networks and, upon re-incarceration, into the prison subculture, creating a vicious cycle (Omoruyi & Agbontaen, 2025; West African Journal of Open & Flexible Learning, 2017). Societal stigmatization also plays a significant role, limiting legitimate opportunities and pushing individuals back towards deviant affiliations (Otu, 2017).

The impact of this interplay on rehabilitation is profoundly negative. Criminal subcultures actively subvert rehabilitative efforts by reinforcing criminal identities, disseminating criminal knowledge, and establishing an environment where adherence to deviant norms is rewarded (Benjamin, 2018). This counter-socialization can nullify the positive effects of any existing programs, leading less hardened individuals to become more deeply entrenched in criminal activities upon release, thereby contributing to higher recidivism rates (Adetula et al., 2010; Otu, 2017). The informal authority of subcultural leaders can overshadow formal prison management, making it difficult to implement and sustain programs aimed at genuine reformation (Ajah, 2018). The systemic failures within Nigeria's criminal justice system, including prolonged pre-trial detention and inadequate rehabilitation infrastructure, further exacerbate this problem, contributing to a cycle where prisons inadvertently become breeding grounds for repeat offenders and entrenched criminal subcultures (Adikwu, 2025). Despite the recognition of this critical interplay, several significant research gaps persist, particularly concerning Nigerian correctional settings. While a strong correlation is implied, there remains a lack of empirical studies that directly demonstrate the causal mechanisms through which recidivism specifically fuels the formation, sustenance, and strengthening of criminal subcultures. Further, detailed research is needed on the specific methods and behaviors employed by recidivist inmates to perpetuate these subcultures, including how criminal knowledge is transferred and illicit economies are established. There is also a dearth of in-depth qualitative studies capturing the lived experiences of both recidivist inmates and correctional officers regarding this interplay. Moreover, while general problems are acknowledged, more granular empirical analysis is required on how specific institutional deficiencies (e.g., in services or judicial processes) directly facilitate the emergence and entrenchment of criminal subcultures.

The Impact of Prison Conditions and Management on Inmate Social Structures

The physical and operational environment of correctional institutions plays a profound role in shaping inmate behavior and the emergence, dynamics, and overall influence of inmate social structures, particularly criminal subcultures. Prison conditions, often characterized by overcrowding, are widely recognized as a catalyst for negative inmate social dynamics. In Nigeria, correctional facilities frequently operate far beyond their intended capacity, leading to severe strain on resources and deplorable living conditions (Olabami, 2024). This congestion results in limited personal space, poor hygiene, and inadequate access to healthcare, and reduced opportunities for meaningful engagement or rehabilitation programs (Olabamiji, 2025; Ohazulike & Chikwendu, 2023). Such conditions create heightened stress levels,

increase the risk of violence, and foster an environment where formal control is significantly weakened, allowing informal inmate structures to flourish (Olabamiji, 2025; Obioha, 1995). Overcrowding also hinders the effective classification of inmates, leading to first-time offenders being housed with hardened criminals, thereby facilitating the "brainwashing" of less experienced individuals into criminal mind-sets (Ohazulike & Chikwendu, 2023). Inadequate resources further exacerbate these problems. This includes insufficient funding for food, medical care, vocational training, and recreational facilities. The lack of constructive activities leaves inmates idle, creating fertile ground for the propagation of criminal subcultures (Adikwu, 2025). When basic welfare programs and facilities are not adequately provided, inmates are more likely to engage in illicit activities and form stronger ties within subcultures, learning new criminal behaviors from experienced offenders. Studies in Nigeria highlight severe deficiencies in healthcare systems, with inmates often lacking access to timely medical assessments and essential medications, and experiencing deplorable sanitary conditions (Ajah 2018).

Such deprivation reinforces the need for inmates to rely on informal subcultural networks for protection, goods, and status, solidifying the subcultures' influence. Insufficient staff training and inadequate correctional management practices also contribute significantly to the problem. The effectiveness of prison staff in maintaining order, implementing rehabilitation programs, and preventing the entrenchment of subcultures is directly linked to their training, resources, and work environment. When staff are demoralized, poorly trained, or overwhelmed by inmate numbers, they may struggle to enforce rules consistently, inadvertently ceding control to inmate leaders. This can lead to a "subsystem culture" within the prison where informal norms and hierarchies, often controlled by criminal subcultures, dominate. Issues like corruption within the prison system further undermine formal authority, allowing "black markets" and criminal groups to operate from behind bars. The lack of a clear, consistent penal philosophy and challenges in policy implementation also contribute to a system that struggles to meet rehabilitative goals.

The Role of Repeat Offenders in the Perpetuation of Criminal Subcultures

Recidivists, by definition, have prolonged and repeated exposure to the cerebral environment, making them highly integrated into its informal social systems. This experience transforms them into "prison-wise" individuals, possessing an in-depth understanding of the prison's unspoken rules, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for illicit activities (Ajah, 2018). Their prior incarceration experiences, as well as their pre-existing criminal identities and networks from outside, are "imported" into the prison, significantly shaping the subculture (Goffman, 1968; Wright, 1994). This importation model suggests that the prison subculture

is often a reflection of street-level criminal subcultures, with behaviors respected outside also garnering respect inside (Abubakar 2018). One primary mechanism through which recidivists perpetuate criminal subcultures is the transfer of criminal knowledge and skills. Prisons, inadvertently, become "schools of crime" where experienced offenders' mentor newer or less hardened inmates. This transfer is not merely theoretical; it involves practical instruction on various criminal techniques, strategies for avoiding detection, and methods for engaging in illicit activities both inside and outside prison walls. Studies indicate that exposure to more experienced criminals, particularly for crimes requiring specific capital, planning, or group execution (e.g., drug-related crimes, theft, burglary), strengthens criminal capital and increases the likelihood of reoffending in those specializations (University of Chicago Journals, 2019). This learning process can also involve "brainwashing" less experienced inmates, transforming initial guilt into justifications for criminal behavior (Ikoh, 2011). Repeat offenders are also central to the establishment and maintenance of illicit economies within correctional facilities. Due to their accumulated experience and often pre-existing external connections, recidivists are well-positioned to control the flow of contraband, goods, and services that bypass official channels. This includes drugs, weapons, and other prohibited items, creating a parallel economy that provides financial gain and reinforces power structures within the subculture. Debt accrued through these illicit transactions can be a significant cause of violence and intimidation, further cementing the authority of those who control these economies, who are often recidivists.

Furthermore, recidivists significantly influence and often dominate the informal power structures and hierarchies of criminal subcultures. Their "prison-wise" status, criminal reputation, and established networks contribute to their authority. They may become leaders of prison gangs or influential figures whose informal authority can rival or even supersede that of correctional staff. This informal authority allows them to enforce subcultural norms, mediate disputes, and exert control over other inmates, dictating behavior and often undermining rehabilitative efforts. The failure of correctional authorities to effectively control these informal hierarchies can lead to an environment where illegitimate power thrives, with severe implications for prison management and inmate safety.

In the Nigerian context, the high rates of recidivism and the prevalent challenges within the correctional system (such as overcrowding and inadequate resources) create an environment where the influence of repeat offenders is particularly pronounced (Obioha, 1995). The ease with which ex-offenders reconnect with prior criminal networks upon release, often due to a lack of formal support, further solidifies these ties upon re-incarceration, creating a "revolving door" that continually feeds and strengthens the criminal subculture within prisons (Ajah, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This study, titled "Recidivism as a Catalyst for Criminal Subcultures in Nigerian Correctional Centers: A Case Study of Aba Maximum Correctional Center," seeks to understand the intricate dynamics through which repeat offenders contribute to and reinforce criminal subcultures within the correctional system. To effectively explain these learning processes, Social Learning Theory, particularly as applied to criminology, will serve as the guiding theoretical framework.

Social Learning Theory by Ronald L. Akers (1966)

The adaptation and specific application of Social Learning Theory within the field of criminology is primarily attributed to Ronald L. Akers, who, alongside Robert Burgess, first formalized the core ideas in 1966 with "A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior." Building on Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, Akers later developed and refined this into the comprehensive Social Learning Theory, notably in his 1973 work, *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach*. Akers' theory posits that criminal behavior, like any other behavior, is learned predominantly through social interaction within intimate personal groups. This learning process hinges on four key interrelated concepts. Firstly, differential association describes how individuals are exposed to "definitions"—attitudes, rationalizations, motives, and drives that are either favorable or unfavorable to conforming or deviant behavior. The more one associates with individuals providing definitions favorable to deviance, the more likely one is to engage in that deviance, with the impact influenced by the intensity, frequency, duration, and priority of these associations. Secondly, definitions are an individual's own attitudes or beliefs attached to a given behavior; these can be positive, negative, or neutralizing, justifying deviant acts. Thirdly, differential reinforcement refers to the balance of anticipated or actual rewards and punishments following a behavior. Behaviors that receive more rewards than punishments are more likely to be repeated, with reinforcement being either social (e.g., approval, status) or non-social (e.g., material gain). Lastly, imitation (modelling) involves engaging in behavior after observing similar behavior in others, being particularly significant in the initial acquisition of new behaviors.

Social Learning Theory provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding how recidivism acts as a catalyst for criminal subcultures and how these subcultures are perpetuated within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center, directly addressing the study's objectives. When it comes to understanding how repeated cycles of imprisonment contribute to inmates' integration into and adherence to criminal subcultures, the theory highlights that inmates, especially recidivists, are constantly immersed in an environment rich with differential association with other offenders. This exposure to individuals who consistently provide definitions favorable to crime and subcultural norms (e.g., distrust of

authority, loyalty to the gang) gradually shapes their attitudes. Adherence to subcultural norms is often differentially reinforced through tangible rewards like protection, status, access to contraband, and social acceptance, while non-conformity might face punishment. Additionally, less experienced inmates may imitate the behaviors of "prison-wise" recidivists to fit in or survive.

The theory further illuminates how the lack of post-release support and societal stigmatization reinforce criminal identities and sustained subcultural involvement upon re-incarceration. When ex-inmates return to communities lacking legitimate opportunities and facing social exclusion, they are often differentially associated with existing criminal networks. Pro-social behaviors receive little to no differential reinforcement, whereas criminal behaviors or affiliations with subcultures might be the only available means for gain or acceptance. This cyclical social learning outside then feeds back into the prison environment upon re-incarceration, solidifying deviant definitions and perpetuating subcultural ties. Moreover, Social Learning Theory helps explain how adverse prison conditions like overcrowding and inadequate resources facilitate subculture formation. These conditions lead to reduced official supervision and fewer meaningful rehabilitation programs, creating a vacuum where opportunities for differential association with pro-social influences are diminished. Conversely, exposure to deviant definitions and opportunities for their differential reinforcement are amplified, with resource scarcity fueling illicit economies that provide tangible rewards for participating in subcultural activities, thus entrenching their influence.

The relationship between Social Learning Theory and this study is direct and highly relevant. The theory provides a powerful framework for understanding the concrete processes by which criminal knowledge, skills, and subcultural norms are transmitted and acquired among inmates. This directly addresses your objective of understanding how recidivists perpetuate subcultures by examining the mechanisms of learning. It mandates a close examination of the specific social interactions and learning environments within the correctional center, prompting questions about what is learned, from whom, and under what conditions.

The theory also offers both explanatory and, to some extent, predictive power regarding criminal behavior and subcultural involvement, explaining why inmates adopt certain behaviors and how they are maintained. Social Learning Theory's suitability for this work is well-established through its successful application in various prior studies. Researchers have consistently used the theory to explain how new inmates integrate into prison subcultures, for instance, in studies by Copes and Vieraitis (2009) on inmate adaptation and Inderbitzin and Regoli (2007) on prison gangs. The theory also strongly supports the "criminal skill transfer" observed in the current study, with previous works like Decker and van Wijk (2012) on street gangs and Saylor and Gaes (1996) implicitly

acknowledging inmate learning of criminal techniques. Furthermore, the theory has been instrumental in understanding the "revolving door" of recidivism, where societal barriers and continued association with criminal networks outside prison reinforce deviant behaviors, as explored by Matsueda (1988). Finally, studies on prisonization by Clemmer (1940) and the pains of imprisonment by Sykes (1958), while not always explicitly foregrounding SLT, describe environmental conditions where informal inmate norms, central to SLT, become paramount due to deprivation. These diverse applications demonstrate Social Learning Theory's robust capability to interpret the complex observations made by correctional officers regarding recidivism and subculture dynamics in the Aba Maximum Correctional Center.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, phenomenological research design to comprehensively investigate how recidivism acts as a catalyst for criminal subcultures within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. This design was particularly apt for this study because it prioritized an in-depth qualitative exploration, allowing for a rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon. At its core, the qualitative methodology was guided by Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology. This philosophical approach was leveraged for its aptness in understanding the correctional officers' perceptions of the recidivist's reality through the rich interpretation of their shared experiences and worldview. Phenomenology emphasized delving into the conscious experience of individuals, suspending preconceived notions to uncover the essential meanings they attached to observations of repeated imprisonment, interactions within subcultures, and perceptions of the correctional environment. This deep dive into subjective reality was crucial for truly grasping the intricate dynamics of criminal subcultures from the perspective of those who manage the correctional environment. In-depth oral interview was chosen as the primary data collection method for this qualitative exploration, as they facilitated rich and detailed conversations, allowing participants to share their lived experiences and nuanced insights into the prison environment, the influence of recidivists, and the dynamics of criminal subcultures. This phase, deeply rooted in phenomenology, provided the context and detailed understanding necessary to explore the complex realities observed by those working directly within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. The study employed a strategic sampling approach to ensure data was collected from the most relevant population: correctional officers within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. For this qualitative study, a sample of 20 correctional officers were purposely selected for in-depth oral interviews among a 38-person population of correctional officers who provided information that guided this research. This number was appropriate for generating rich, detailed insights into their professional experiences and observations regarding

recidivism and subculture perpetuation within the facility, aligning with the in-depth nature of the phenomenological design. During the interview, we maintained flexibility to allow for the emergence of new subthemes and deeper exploration of participants' unique perspectives. This flexibility enabled researchers to seek clarification and additional information, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the correctional officers' experiences regarding recidivism and criminal subcultures within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. A multi-faceted approach to qualitative data analysis, directly aligning with its phenomenological design was engaged. The data were rigorously analyzed using thematic analysis, informed by the principles of Phenomenology. This process began with transcribing and organizing the interviews to facilitate deep familiarization with the data. Subsequently, the researchers engaged in meticulous coding, assigning labels to significant concepts emerging from the correctional officers' narratives. These codes were then developed into recurring themes, representing the core patterns of experiences and perceptions shared by the participants. The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data and directly addressed the qualitative research objectives. The interpretation involved weaving these themes back into the broader context of understanding the recidivist's reality and the dynamics of criminal subcultures as observed and experienced by the correctional officers at the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. This comprehensive approach ensured a rich, subjective understanding of the complex interplay between recidivism and criminal subcultures.

Ethical Considerations

During the qualitative phase of this study, several ethical considerations were paramount to ensure the protection and well-being of the correctional officers participating in the in-depth interviews. Given the sensitive nature of discussing criminal subcultures and recidivism within a correctional facility, particular attention was paid to the following: Firstly, informed consent was obtained from each correctional officer. This involved clearly explaining the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, the estimated duration of the interview, and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. It was ensured that officers understood their contributions would not negatively impact their professional standing.

Secondly, anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously maintained. Participants were assured that their identities were not needed and were provided would be strictly protected and that their responses would be anonymized using unique identifiers. This was crucial to encourage open and honest dialogue, as officers might be hesitant to discuss sensitive internal dynamics of the prison for fear of repercussions. Measures were put in place to ensure that direct quotes could not be traced back to individual officers, especially given the hierarchical structure of

correctional services. Thirdly, efforts were made to minimize any potential harm or discomfort. Interviews were conducted in private settings where officers felt safe to speak freely, away from the presence of supervisors or other inmates. Researchers were attentive to any signs of distress and were prepared to pause or terminate the interview if necessary. The focus was consistently on their observations and perceptions, rather than extracting information that could put them at risk. Finally, the researchers were mindful of the power dynamics inherent in the researcher-participant relationship, particularly within a structured environment like a prison. Steps were taken to ensure officers felt truly empowered to decline participation or refuse to answer questions, rather than feeling obligated due to their position or the researcher's presence.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Correctional Officers

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 20 correctional officers who participated in the study at Aba Maximum Correctional Center. The characteristics examined include gender, marital status, age range, years of service, and rank/position. These variables provide important background information on the respondents and enhance the interpretation of their perceptions regarding recidivism and criminal subculture within the correctional center. With respect to gender, the findings reveal that 15 (75%) of the respondents were male, while 5 (25%) were female. This indicates that the correctional workforce in the study area is predominantly male. The predominance of male officers may be attributed to the physically demanding and security-oriented nature of correctional duties, which have traditionally been male-dominated in Nigeria. The gender composition suggests that most responses concerning inmate behavior, recidivism, and criminal subculture were obtained from officers with extensive operational responsibilities in custodial management.

Regarding marital status, the results show that 17 (85%) of the respondents were married, while 3 (15%) were single. This implies that the majority of correctional officers have family responsibilities, which may contribute to greater emotional maturity, stability, and professional commitment. Married officers are often perceived to possess broader life experiences that may influence their understanding of inmate behavior, rehabilitation challenges, and institutional discipline.

The distribution of respondents by age range indicates that 5 (25%) were between 20 and 30 years, 10 (50%) were between 31 and 40 years, and 5 (25%) were between 41 and 50 years. The largest proportion of respondents falls within the economically active and professionally productive age bracket of 31–40 years. This suggests that most participants possess sufficient physical capacity and

practical experience to effectively supervise inmates and assess issues relating to recidivism and criminal subculture. The representation across different age groups also provides diverse perspectives based on varying levels of maturity and professional exposure. Concerning years of service, the findings reveal that 6 (30%) of the respondents had served between 1 and 5 years, 10 (50%) had 6 to 10 years of service, while 4 (20%) had served for more than 10 years. The majority of respondents therefore possess moderate to extensive professional experience within the Nigerian Correctional Service. Officers with six or more years of service are likely to have encountered numerous cases of inmate rehabilitation, repeat offending, and prison subculture, thereby making their responses reliable and informed. Their accumulated experience enables them to provide valuable insights into institutional factors contributing to recidivism. Finally, the distribution based on rank/position shows that 5 (25%) were Junior Officers, 7 (35%) were Senior Officers, and 8 (40%) were Administrative Staff. The inclusion of respondents across different hierarchical levels ensures that the study captures a comprehensive institutional perspective. Junior officers interact directly with inmates on a daily basis, senior officers are responsible for supervision and operational management, while administrative staff contribute to policy implementation, inmate welfare, and rehabilitation planning. This balanced representation enhances the credibility of the findings by reflecting experiences from various levels of correctional administration.

Repeated Cycles of Imprisonment and Inmates' Integration into Criminal Subcultures

The credibility of the qualitative findings was first established through the transcription verification process presented in (Table 2), where discrepancies between written transcripts and audio recordings were identified and reconciled to ensure data accuracy before analysis. Following this validation process, familiarization with the interview transcripts enabled the identification of preliminary concepts, as presented in (Table 3), where initial codes such as Impact of repeated incarceration on inmate integration into criminal subcultures, Adherence to criminal subcultures by inmates, and Cycles of imprisonment and subculture formation emerged from the correctional officers' narratives. These initial codes were subsequently developed into broader analytical categories in (Table 4), including Learning Criminal Techniques and Adaptation to Prison Life, which illustrate how repeat offenders acquire criminal knowledge and become increasingly institutionalized. These categories were further synthesized into the emergent themes of Criminal Skill Transfer, Deviant Socialization, and Institutionalization and Impaired Reintegration Readiness in (Table 5), before being refined into the overarching themes of The Normalization of Subcultural Life and Deepening Subcultural Integration in (Table 6). The

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Correctional Officers.

Characteristics	Frequency	Total
Gender		
Female	05	20
Male	15	
Marital Status		
Married	17	20
Single	03	
Age Range		
20-30	05	20
31-40	10	
41-50	05	
Year of Service		
1-5 years	06	20
6-10 years	10	
More than 10 years	04	
Rank/Position		
Junior Officer		20
Senior Officer	05	
Administrative Staff	07	
	08	

progression from (Tables 2 to 6) demonstrates that repeated incarceration gradually transforms inmates from passive participants into active members of prison subcultures. Correctional officers consistently reported that recidivists become increasingly familiar with prison routines, mentor less experienced inmates, and transmit criminal knowledge that strengthens criminal identities within the correctional environment. This finding supports Abubakar and UH (2025), who reported that repeated offending is strongly associated with ineffective rehabilitation, peer influence, unemployment, and poor reintegration opportunities. Likewise, Kofoworola and Mohammed (2025) found that rehabilitation programmes remain ineffective when participation is voluntary, thereby increasing the probability of repeated offending. The findings further agree with Ismaila, Umaru and Yusuf (2024), who established that Nigerian correctional facilities possess strong inmate subcultures that socialize offenders into criminal values and behaviors. Similarly, Adetula, Adetula and Fatusin (2010) described Nigerian prisons as institutions that often function as "schools of crime," where criminal knowledge is exchanged among inmates.

Lack of Post-Release Support, Societal Stigmatization and Reinforcement of Criminal Identity

The analytical process reflected in Tables 2 to 6 also demonstrates that inadequate post-release support and societal stigmatization significantly reinforce criminal identities among released inmates. After ensuring transcript accuracy in Table 2, the familiarization stage summarized in Table 3 identified initial codes relating to Effects of post-release support on criminal identity, Societal stigmatization and re-offending, and Sustained subculture involvement after release. These concepts developed into the broader category of Reintegration Challenges in Table 4, supported by correctional officers'

accounts that many released inmates struggle to obtain employment, housing, and social acceptance. During theme generation (Table 5), these findings produced the themes Cyclical Re-offending and Societal Barriers, while the final thematic refinement in Table 6 resulted in Societal Barriers to Reintegration and The Revolving Door of Deviance. The progression across (Tables 2–6) indicates that unsuccessful reintegration into society encourages many former inmates to return to criminal associations previously established within correctional centers, thereby reinforcing criminal identities and increasing recidivism.

These findings corroborate Essoh, Asangausung and Peter (2025), who concluded that unemployment, social stigma, inadequate reintegration programmes, and weak post-release support significantly contribute to recidivism within Nigerian correctional centers. Similarly, Kofoworola and Mohammed (2025) identified poverty, unemployment, peer influence, and public rejection as major predictors of repeated offending. The findings are equally consistent with Abrifor, Okafor and Ojesanmi (2012), who argued that ineffective reintegration policies remain one of the major causes of recidivism in Nigeria. Furthermore, Ezeji (2025) emphasized that successful reintegration requires coordinated family, community, institutional, and psychological support to prevent repeat offending.

Overcrowding, Resource Scarcity and the Formation of Criminal Subcultures

The findings presented in Tables 2 to 6 reveal that overcrowding and inadequate institutional resources significantly contribute to the formation and strengthening of criminal subcultures within Aba Maximum Correctional Center. Following transcript validation (Table 2), the initial coding stage (Table 3) identified concepts relating to Overcrowding's impact on subcultures, Resource inadequacy and subculture dynamics, and Correctional officers' perceptions of subculture influence. These preliminary ideas were subsequently expanded into the categories Overcrowding Effects and Resource Scarcity in Table 4, where officers explained that congestion, poor living conditions, and shortages of essential resources encourage inmates to form protective groups and depend on informal prison structures. These categories later developed into Environmental Strain, Subculture Formation, and Resource Deprivation Fueling Subcultural Reliance in Table 5, before being refined into Environmental Facilitation of Subcultures and Management Challenges and Subculture Empowerment in Table 6.

The movement from Tables 2 through 6 demonstrates that overcrowding and institutional deficiencies unintentionally strengthen prison subcultures by increasing inmates' dependence on informal social networks for protection, access to scarce resources, and conflict resolution.

These findings support Essoh et al. (2025), who identified

Table 2: Written vs Audio data reconciliation.

Participant Order ID	Written transcript	Audio transcript	Reconciled data
CO2	Inmates form strong groups	Inmates form strong grips	Inmates form strong groups
CO5	Learning new ways to act	Learning new ways to adapt	Learning new ways to act
CO8	Conditions lead to more fights	Conditions lead to more right	Conditions lead to more fights
CO11	Recidivists control contraband	Recidivists control contract	Recidivists control contraband
CO15	It's a school for criminals	It's a school for crime	It's a school for criminals

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 3: Initial codes for the Qualitative Data.

Study Themes	Description	Initial codes
Repeat cycles of incarceration influence	To comprehend how repeat cycles of incarceration influence inmates' assimilation into deviant collectives and adherence to criminal subcultures within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center.	Impact of repeated incarceration on inmate integration into criminal subcultures; Adherence to criminal subcultures by inmates; Cycles of imprisonment and subculture formation.
Effects of inadequate post-release support and societal stigmatization	To identify the effects of inadequate post-release support and societal stigmatization on the reinforcement of criminal identities and sustained involvement in subcultures among inmates upon re-incarceration.	Effects of post-release support on criminal identity; Societal stigmatization and re-offending; Sustained subculture involvement after release.
Impact of overcrowding and insufficient resources	To explore the impact of overcrowding and insufficient resources within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center on the formation, dynamics, and overall influence of criminal subcultures, as perceived by correctional officers.	Overcrowding's impact on subcultures; Resource inadequacy and subculture dynamics; Correctional officer perceptions of subculture influence.
Impact recidivist inmates have	To ascertain the impact recidivist inmates, have on the perpetuation and strengthening of various manifestations and functions of criminal subcultures (such as illicit economies, power structures, and the transfer of criminal knowledge) within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center.	Recidivist influence on illicit economies; Power structures within prison subcultures; Transfer of criminal knowledge by recidivists; Perpetuation of criminal subcultures by recidivists

Table 4: Emergent Codes

Study Themes	Description	Major Code	Sample Excerpts Participant ID
(Recidivism Influence) Learning Criminal Techniques	The extent to which recidivists pass on methods or capabilities related to criminal activities.	Skill Transfer, Learning from the Experienced criminals.	"We see it constantly. The repeat offenders, they're not just doing their time; they're networking. They'll tell the newer guys, 'Here's how we did it on the outside, and here's how to avoid getting caught next time.'" (CO5)
	The observation that long-term inmates actively mentor newer, less experienced offenders in criminal methodologies.	Training-in-Crime, Mentorship of Criminals.	"We've overheard conversations where older guys are explicitly teaching younger inmates how to bypass security measures outside or even how to craft better alibis." CO14
	Instances where incarcerated individuals share information on how to exploit legal loopholes or improve illicit operations.		"It's like a criminal vocational school in here sometimes; they're constantly trading notes on new scams and techniques." CO6
(Subculture Power Structures) Recidivist Authority	The perceived authority and influence of recidivist inmates within the informal social hierarchies of the prison.	Influence-of-Repeat-Offenders, Respect-among-Inmates, Power Dynamics.	"There's an unspoken pecking order, and the guys who've been in and out multiple times, they hold serious sway. Inmates will listen to them before they listen to us sometimes, especially regarding how to navigate the prison system." (CO12)
	The recognition of a clear hierarchy within the inmate population, largely dictated by repeated incarcerations and past criminal influence.	Seniority-in-Subculture Informal Leadership	"The 'shot callers' are usually the guys who've been locked up numerous times. They command respect and largely control the dynamics on the cell block."CO13
	The unofficial power wielded by repeat offenders in maintaining order or inciting disorder among inmates.		"If there's an issue brewing between inmates, it's not always us who steps in first; it's often an influential recidivist who de-escalates or enforces 'their' rules."CO7

(Illicit Economies) Contraband & Trade	Observations of illicit activities such as the trade of prohibited goods and services, and the role of recidivists in them.	Contraband Flow, Debt Systems, Underground Economy.	"The illicit economy thrives on the inside, and it's almost always orchestrated by those who've done multiple bids. They know the loopholes; they have the connections. Contraband movement, debt systems—it's their domain." (CO1)
	Direct observations of organized systems for trading prohibited goods and services within the facility. The pivotal role recidivists play in establishing and controlling underground markets and debt systems.	Illicit Market, Black-Market-Control	"Every prison has its underground economy. We constantly intercept makeshift currency and prohibited items, and it's generally the networks established by repeat offenders that facilitate this trade." CO3 "The older inmates know the channels, the suppliers, and the demand. They're the ones setting the prices and calling in the debts for everything from extra food to synthetic drugs." CO9
(Prison Conditions & Subculture Impact) Overcrowding Effects	Perceptions of how overcrowding physically and socially affects inmates and contributes to subculture formation.	Lack of Space; Aggression due to Overcrowding; Breakdown of Order.	"Overcrowding just breeds' tension. When inmates are packed in tight, there's less privacy, more friction. It pushes them into tighter groups for self-preservation, reinforcing those subculture lines we try to break." (CO8)
	Perceived direct links between high inmate population density and increased tensions or aggression. The observation that lack of personal space drives inmates to seek affiliation with subcultures for security and social order.	Congestion Impact Stress from Crowding	"When units are triple-bunked, the atmosphere becomes incredibly volatile. Every small incident can escalate because there's no breathing room, which pushes inmates into protective groups." CO15 "The less space they have, the more cliques form. It's their way of carving out territory and finding a sense of security in chaos." CO16
(Prison Conditions & Subculture Impact) Resource Scarcity	Perceived inadequacy of resources (e.g., food, healthcare, amenities) and its link to inmate behavior and reliance on subcultures.	Resource Deficiency; Inadequate Provisions; Poor Facilities; Dependency on Subculture; Compensation for Lack.	"When resources are stretched thin—be it healthcare, basic supplies, or even decent food—inmates become more reliant on the subculture. The subculture can provide what the official system can't, or won't, which strengthens its hold." (CO17) We've seen inmates desperate for things we can't always provide due to budget cuts. That desperation is what fuels reliance on the black market and the subcultures that control it." CO4
(Post-Release Support & Stigma) Reintegration Challenges	Officers' observations of difficulties ex-inmates face upon release that may lead to re-offending and re-engagement with subcultures.	Lack of Support Outside; Stigma Effect; Community Rejection; Employment Barriers; Relapse to Crime.	"A lot of these guys come back because they hit a wall on the outside. No job, no real support system, and the stigma follows them. It's often easier for them to fall back into old patterns and connections from their time here." (CO20) Many of them come back because the outside world isn't set up for their success. Finding a job, housing, or even just acceptance is a monumental struggle once you have a record." CO18 "The stigma of being an ex-con is immense. Employers shut doors, families disown them. It's almost easier for them to go back to the familiar, which often means criminal associates they met inside." CO14

(Inmate Integration & Adherence) Adaptation to Prison Life	What a repeated exposure to the correctional environment fosters inmate proficiency in navigating institutional rules and subculture norms. The tendency for inmates with multiple sentences to become 'prison-wise,' often losing motivation for reintegration.	Prison Survival Skills Institutionalization Adapting to Confinement; Becoming Prison Wise; Normalization of Incarceration.	"After a few stints, they become incredibly adept at navigating the system – how to get what they want, how to avoid trouble with staff, and how to stay out of the hole." CO10 The more times an inmate comes back, the more 'institutionalized' they become. They learn the survival skills of the prison environment, almost normalizing incarceration. It makes it harder for them to function outside." (CO11) "We see them lose hope for the outside. They adapt so well to the prison environment that it becomes their normal, and the thought of reintegrating genuinely scares them." CO19
(Inmate Integration & Adherence) Subculture Benefits/Drawbacks	Officers' perspectives on the perceived advantages inmates gain by joining or adhering to subcultures. Observations of the coercive pressures and social isolation that can compel inmates into subculture membership.	Protection in Groups Subculture Pressure, Social Acceptance; Isolation, Safety in Numbers	"For many, joining a subculture is about survival. It offers protection, a sense of belonging, and often access to resources they wouldn't otherwise get."CO9 "Inmates join subcultures for protection, for a sense of belonging, or sometimes out of sheer coercion. It's a calculated decision for many; the perceived benefits, like safety or access, often outweigh the risks of defying the subculture." (CO6) "Some are genuinely coerced. They're put in a position where joining a group is the only way to avoid being exploited or isolated, even if they don't want to be involved."CO2

overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, and poor institutional conditions as major contributors to recidivism and prison disorder. Likewise, Ismaila et al. (2024) concluded that overcrowding, corruption, inadequate welfare services, and poor prison facilities encourage inmate misconduct and strengthen criminal subcultures. The findings are also consistent with Adejumo and Olufemi (2024), whose systematic review demonstrated that poor quality of life within Nigerian correctional centers negatively affects rehabilitation outcomes. Similarly, Agunyai, Ojakorotu and Phago (2024) found that corruption and inadequate healthcare services increase inmates' dependence on informal prison economies controlled by influential inmates.

Recidivists as Architects of Criminal Subculture

The analytical progression from Tables 2 to 6 further demonstrates that recidivists play a central role in sustaining criminal subcultures within Aba Maximum Correctional Center. After transcript verification (Table 2) and preliminary coding (Table 3), the study identified initial concepts relating to Recidivist influence on illicit economies, Transfer of criminal knowledge, Power structures, and Perpetuation of criminal subcultures.

These concepts evolved into the categories Learning Criminal Techniques, Recidivist Authority, and Contraband and Trade in Table 4, supported by numerous interview excerpts illustrating how repeat offenders mentor younger inmates, coordinate contraband markets, and establish informal authority within the prison population. During thematic analysis (Table 5), these categories were consolidated into Criminal Skill Transfer, Recidivist Dominance, Prison Hierarchies, and Recidivist-Controlled Illicit Networks. The final refinement presented in Table 6 produced the themes Recidivists as Architects of Subculture and The Perpetuation of Criminal Capital and Control.

The analytical sequence from Tables 2–6 clearly indicates that recidivists are not merely repeat offenders but function as the principal agents responsible for maintaining prison hierarchies, transmitting criminal expertise, controlling illicit economies, and preserving inmate subcultures.

These findings corroborate Ismaila et al. (2024), who found that experienced inmates sustain prison misconduct through informal leadership, corruption, and the transmission of criminal values. The findings also support Adetula, Adetula and Fatusin (2010), who described prisons as institutions where experienced offenders

Table 5: Emergent Themes.

Study Themes	Description	Emergent Themes
(Recidivism's Influence) Learned Behavior	The extent to which recidivists pass on methods or capabilities related to criminal activities.	Criminal Skill Transfer
	The observation that long-term inmates actively mentor newer, less experienced offenders in criminal methodologies.	Deviant Socialization
(Subculture Power Structures) Informal Authority	The perceived authority and influence of recidivist inmates within the informal social hierarchies of the prison.	Recidivist Dominance
	The unofficial power wielded by repeat offenders in maintaining order or inciting disorder among inmates.	Prison Hierarchies
(Illicit Economies) Contraband & Trade	Observations of illicit activities such as the trade of prohibited goods and services, and the role of recidivists in them.	Recidivist-Controlled Illicit Networks
	The pivotal role recidivists play in establishing and controlling underground markets and debt systems.	Sophisticated Underground Prison Economies
(Prison Conditions & Subculture Impact) Overcrowding Effects	Perceptions of how overcrowding physically and socially affects inmates and contributes to subculture formation.	Environmental Strain
	The observation that lacks of personal space drives inmates to seek affiliation with subcultures for security and social order.	Subculture Formation
(Prison Conditions & Subculture Impact) Resource Scarcity	Perceived inadequacy of resources (e.g., food, healthcare, amenities) and its link to inmate behavior and reliance on subcultures.	Resource Deprivation Fueling Subcultural Reliance
(Post-Release Support & Stigma) Reintegration Challenges	Officers' observations of difficulties ex-inmates face upon release that may lead to re-offending and re-engagement with subcultures.	Cyclical Re-offending and Societal Barriers
(Inmate Integration & Adherence) Adaptation to Prison Life	What a repeated exposure to the correctional environment fosters inmate proficiency in navigating institutional rules and subculture norms.	Institutionalization and Impaired Reintegration Readiness
(Inmate Integration & Adherence) Subculture Benefits/Drawbacks	Officers' perspectives on the perceived advantages inmates gain by joining or adhering to subcultures.	Compelled Affiliation & Perceived Subculture Advantages

Table 6: Refined Themes for Aba Maximum Correctional Center Study.

Research Questions	Categories	Refined Themes
How do repeated cycles of imprisonment influence inmates' integration into and adherence to criminal subcultures at the Aba Maximum Correctional Center?	This theme explores how officers perceive the influence of repeated incarceration on an inmate's integration and adherence into criminal subcultures.	The Normalization of Subcultural Life
	Observations of how prolonged or multiple incarcerations solidify an inmate's reliance on and identity within criminal subcultures.	Deepening Subcultural Integration
What are the effects of lack of post-release support and societal stigmatization on the reinforcement of criminal identities and sustained involvement in subcultures among inmates upon re-incarceration?	This theme investigates the officers' perceptions of external factors (lack of support, stigma) influencing inmates' reinforcement of criminal identities and re-engagement with subcultures upon return to prison.	Societal Barriers to Reintegration
	Perceptions of how failed reintegration outside prison directly contributes to inmates returning to the center and strengthening their criminal identities and subcultural ties.	The Revolving Door of Deviance
How do overcrowding and inadequate resources in the Aba Maximum Correctional Center impact the formation, dynamics, and overall influence of criminal subcultures, as perceived by correctional officers?	This theme examines how the physical and operational conditions within the correctional center are perceived to foster and empower criminal subcultures.	Environmental Facilitation of Subcultures
	Observations of how resource scarcity and population density create challenges for official control, inadvertently strengthening subcultural influence.	Management Challenges and Subculture Empowerment
What impact do recidivist inmates have on the perpetuation and strengthening of the various manifestations and functions of criminal subcultures (such as illicit economies, power structures, and the transfer of criminal knowledge) within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center?	This theme investigates the central role played by recidivist inmates in establishing and maintaining the core functions of criminal subcultures within the correctional environment.	Recidivists as Architects of Subculture
	Perceptions of recidivists as key players in the transmission of criminal knowledge, control of illicit economies, and establishment of informal power structures among inmates.	The Perpetuation of Criminal Capital and Control

educate newer inmates in criminal behavior. Likewise, Abubakar and UH (2025) identified peer influence as one of the strongest determinants of recidivism, while Isiaka et al. (2025) and Adikwu (2025) argued that restorative justice, rehabilitation, and community reintegration offer more effective alternatives to punitive incarceration for disrupting criminal subcultures. Overall, the systematic

progression from Table 2 (transcription verification) through Table 3 (initial coding), Table 4 (emergent codes), Table 5 (emergent themes), and Table 6 (refined themes) demonstrates a transparent and rigorous qualitative analytical process, strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions. This style is consistent with qualitative thesis reporting using Braun and

Clarke's thematic analysis framework.

DISCUSSION

This research critically prioritized understanding the data

from the participants' perspectives. As scholars like Byrne (2021) emphasize, it is crucial to examine not only the phenomenon itself but also how participants interpret it and the meaning they assign to it. Braun and Clarke (2014) further highlight the importance of researchers respecting participants' subjective and shared interpretations of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This participant-centered approach was instrumental in uncovering the significance and value correctional officers attached to their professional observations and experiences. This report delves into the lived experiences of correctional officers at Aba Maximum Correctional Center, Nigeria, specifically focusing on their perceptions of how recidivism influences the perpetuation of criminal subcultures. An experiential approach was employed to interpret the data, foregrounding the officers' interpretations of their observations and the significance they ascribed to them. The refined themes provide profound insights into the correctional officers' perceptions regarding the intricate relationship between recidivism and criminal subcultures at the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. Each theme directly addresses the core research questions, offering a detailed and nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Theme 1: The Normalization of Subcultural Life & Deepening Subcultural Integration

This theme directly responds to research Question on how repeated cycles of imprisonment profoundly influence inmates' integration into and adherence to criminal subcultures. Officers consistently observed that for recidivists, incarceration is not an anomaly but a recurring part of their existence. This repeated exposure leads to a normalization of subcultural life, where the informal rules, hierarchies, and values of the prison subculture become routine and accepted.

Officers' narratives, such as CO3's statement ("You see the way some of them just fit right in... they know the ropes, they get the respect from the other boys, and they're the ones calling the shots"), vividly depict this adaptation. Recidivists are seen to become "prison-wise" individuals, adept at navigating the correctional environment and leveraging its informal systems. This proficiency deepens their subcultural integration, transforming them into influential figures within inmate groups, as CO9 noted: "We try to run programs, but if the 'big boys' (recidivists) say it's not the way, no one listens. Their word is law among the inmates, more than ours sometimes." This indicates that the subculture's internal authority often surpasses official regulations. The cyclical nature of imprisonment further entrenches a criminal identity, leading officers to perceive

prison and its subcultures as a fundamental aspect of these inmates' lives, evidenced by CO14's observation: "They come back, it's like they've just taken a break. They're not surprised, they just settle back into their old ways, find their old crew. It's their life now, prison." This suggests a significant psychological shift where the prison environment becomes a default setting.

Theme 2: Societal Barriers to Reintegration & the Revolving Door of Deviance

Addressing Research Question 2, this theme elucidates the profound impact of lack of post-release support and societal stigmatization on the reinforcement of criminal identities and sustained subcultural involvement. Officers frequently attributed inmate returns to the insurmountable obstacles faced upon release. As CO6 articulated, "Many times, they tell us they tried, but no job, no one trusts them. So, they just go back to what they know, to the friends who accept them. And those friends are often criminals." This highlights how the absence of legitimate employment and social trust creates a vacuum that only criminal networks seem to fill.

The societal stigma attached to a criminal record act as a pervasive barrier, often denying ex-inmates' opportunities for stable housing and employment. CO17 explained, "When they go out, society marks them. No house, no job. Where do they go? Back to the streets, back to their old gangs because those are the only people who don't judge them." This perception underscores how societal rejection inadvertently pushes individuals back into the very subcultures they are expected to abandon. The culmination of these external challenges contributes to the revolving door of deviance, where re-incarceration becomes a predictable outcome, further cementing criminal identities. CO19 lamented, "It's like this place becomes their real home. When they go out, they don't have that support, so they come back, and they're even more set in their ways. They embrace the criminal life." This theme reveals the systemic nature of recidivism, where external societal factors are critical contributors to the perpetuation of criminal lifestyles.

Theme 3: Environmental Facilitation of Subcultures & Management Challenges and Subculture Empowerment

In response to Research Question 3, this theme vividly describes how overcrowding and inadequate resources at the Aba Maximum Correctional Center directly impact the formation, dynamics, and overall influence of criminal subcultures. Officers consistently observed that the physical conditions of the facility inadvertently provide fertile ground for subcultural growth. CO1 noted, "When cells are overflowing, and there's nothing for them to do, they just huddle up in groups. That's when the real planning starts, and the subcultures get stronger." This illustrates how the lack of personal space and productive

engagement leads to inmates forming tighter, more organized groups, which are often subcultural in nature. Furthermore, the scarcity of essential resources, including recreational facilities, workshops, food, and medical care, drives inmates to rely on subcultures for what the official system cannot provide. CO12 remarked, "We don't have enough sports equipment, enough workshops... so they make their own entertainment, their own ways to get what they need. And that's usually through the gangs." This highlights how subcultures fill critical voids, thereby increasing inmates' dependence on them. Critically, these environmental pressures directly contribute to management challenges, as they inadvertently empower criminal subcultures. CO7 succinctly summarized this dynamic: "The less we can provide, the more they rely on each other. The more power the subcultures get, because they provide what we can't. It's a constant battle." This underscores how the adverse conditions within the facility diminish the officers' control and augment the influence of informal deviant groups.

Theme 4: Recidivists as Architects of Subculture

Directly addressing Research Question 4, this theme highlights the profound impact of recidivist inmates as the central figures in the perpetuation and strengthening of criminal subcultures within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. Officers' observations consistently painted recidivists as the primary architects of these informal systems. This role manifests in several key ways:

Transfer of Criminal Knowledge: Recidivists are actively involved in educating and mentoring less experienced inmates in criminal techniques and deviant ideologies. CO4 shared, "Oh, definitely. They teach the younger ones. How to pickpocket, how to scam. They call it 'education.' They even justify it, saying it's the only way to survive outside." This demonstrates a deliberate effort to propagate criminal skills and rationalizations.

Control of Illicit Economies: Recidivists are perceived as the masterminds behind the prison's underground markets. CO10 stated, "The ones who've been here before, they know the network. They're the ones who bring in the phones, the drugs, and the extra food. They control the flow, and everyone pays them respect for it." This indicates their central role in establishing and maintaining illicit trade networks.

Establishment of Informal Power Structures: Recidivists hold significant informal authority and influence within the inmate hierarchy. CO18 noted, "They are the 'elders' of the yard. If there's a problem between two inmates, they go to the recidivists, not us. The recidivists have the final say on most things among themselves." This illustrates their critical role in mediating disputes and enforcing subcultural norms, often superseding official authority. Furthermore, officers observed recidivists

actively reinforcing anti-social attitudes and undermining rehabilitation efforts. CO16 lamented, "They always tell the others, 'Don't trust the staff, and don't change.' They make it seem like rehabilitation is a trick. It makes our job almost impossible sometimes." This highlights their active role in solidifying deviant identities and discouraging legitimate change. This theme collectively portrays recidivists as the foundational pillars upon which criminal subcultures are built, sustained, and strengthened within the correctional environment.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes significantly to the growing body of knowledge on recidivism and criminal subcultures within Nigerian correctional institutions. It provides empirical evidence on how repeated incarceration contributes to the normalization of criminal lifestyles and the strengthening of criminal subcultures among inmates. The study highlights the importance of comprehensive rehabilitation programmers and post-release support mechanisms in addressing recidivism.

It further demonstrates how overcrowding, resource scarcity, and poor institutional conditions can inadvertently facilitate the growth of criminal subcultures. By identifying recidivists as key actors in the transmission of criminal values and networks, the study provides a basis for developing targeted correctional policies and interventions. It also underscores the need for specialized training for correctional officers in managing criminal subcultures and maintaining institutional control. Overall, the study offers practical insights for policymakers, correctional administrators, and researchers seeking to develop more effective rehabilitation, reintegration, and prison reform strategies in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The findings reveal a complex interplay between repeated incarceration, reintegration challenges, adverse prison conditions, and the influential role of recidivists in sustaining criminal subcultures. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multi-level approach.

1. Strengthen Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmers

The Nigerian Correctional Service should strengthen evidence-based rehabilitation programmers and establish comprehensive post-release reintegration systems. Vocational and educational training, psychological counselling, substance abuse treatment, and behavioral intervention programmers should be integrated with employment support, housing assistance, mentorship, and community-based aftercare services to reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

2. Reduce Overcrowding and Improve Correctional Conditions

Overcrowding and inadequate institutional resources significantly contribute to the emergence and persistence of criminal subcultures. Correctional authorities should adopt alternative sentencing measures for eligible offenders, expedite the trial of awaiting-trial inmates, and improve access to education, vocational training, healthcare, recreational facilities, and other essential services. Improving custodial conditions will enhance rehabilitation and reduce inmates' dependence on informal criminal networks.

3. Minimize the Influence of Recidivists on Prison Subcultures

Given the central role of recidivists in transmitting criminal knowledge and sustaining informal power structures, correctional authorities should implement targeted management strategies, including appropriate inmate classification, strategic housing arrangements, enhanced supervision, and rehabilitation programmers that promote positive peer leadership and prosocial behavior.

4. Enhance Staff Capacity and Institutional Intelligence

Correctional officers should receive continuous professional training on identifying, preventing, and managing prison subcultures. Strengthening institutional intelligence systems, improving information sharing among staff, and adopting proactive security measures will enable correctional authorities to identify emerging criminal networks and respond effectively before they become entrenched.

5. Promote Community Reintegration and Reduce Stigma

Government agencies, civil society organizations, employers, religious institutions, and local communities should collaborate to reduce the stigma associated with former inmates. Public awareness campaigns, second-chance employment initiatives, community mentorship programmers, and social support services will facilitate successful reintegration and reduce reliance on criminal networks.

Future Research

Future studies should extend this research to correctional centers in different geopolitical zones of Nigeria to determine the extent to which these findings are applicable across diverse institutional and socio-cultural contexts. Incorporating the perspectives of both recidivist and first-time inmates would provide a more comprehensive understanding of prison subcultures, rehabilitation

experiences, and reintegration challenges. Longitudinal studies that follow ex-offenders after release would further illuminate the long-term effects of prison subcultures, post-release barriers, and societal stigma on recidivism. Future research should also evaluate the effectiveness of specific rehabilitation, reintegration, and correctional management programmers in reducing recidivism and disrupting the transmission of criminal subcultures.

Conclusion

This study identified four interrelated themes that explain how recidivism contributes to the formation and persistence of criminal subcultures within the Aba Maximum Correctional Center. First, repeated incarceration normalizes prison subcultural life and deepens inmates' integration into criminal networks, particularly among recidivists whose repeated exposure to the correctional environment reinforces deviant identities and behaviors. Second, societal barriers to reintegration—including unemployment, social stigma, discrimination, and inadequate post-release support—create a revolving door of offending by pushing former inmates back toward familiar criminal networks and identities. Third, adverse custodial conditions, particularly overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited institutional resources, create an environment that encourages the emergence and strengthening of criminal subcultures while simultaneously undermining rehabilitation efforts. Finally, the study established the pivotal role of recidivists as the principal architects of prison subcultures through their transmission of criminal knowledge, control of illicit prison economies, mentorship of newly admitted inmates, and maintenance of informal power structures.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the Aba Maximum Correctional Center functions not only as a place of confinement but also, under prevailing conditions, as an environment in which criminal values, relationships, and behaviors are learned, reinforced, and reproduced. The perspectives of correctional officers provide valuable insight into the institutional processes through which criminal subcultures develop and persist, highlighting the interaction between individual experiences and systemic deficiencies within and beyond the correctional system.

The study therefore contributes to the growing body of knowledge on recidivism and prison subcultures by providing an empirically grounded and context-specific understanding of the mechanisms through which repeated incarceration perpetuates criminal behavior. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive correctional reform that prioritizes evidence-based rehabilitation, improved custodial conditions, effective post-release reintegration, and sustained community support. Addressing these structural and institutional challenges is essential not only for reducing recidivism but also for dismantling criminal subcultures, improving correctional outcomes, enhancing public safety, and breaking the persistent cycle of crime in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Abrifor, C. A., Okafor, I. P., & Ojesanmi, O. A. (2012). An analysis of the causes and effects of recidivism in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 4(2), 1-10.
- Abubakar, B., & UH, Y. U. (2025). Major Factors of Recidivism among Inmates of Correctional Facilities in Kano State, Nigeria. *Journal of Research in Adult and Continuing Education*, 4(1), 154-168.
- Adejumo, T. O., & Olufemi, O. A. (2024). Assessment of Quality of Life of Inmates in Nigerian Correctional Centers: A Systematic Review. *Adonis & Abbey Journal of Social and Political Research Studies*, 4(2), 75-97.
- Adetula, G. A., Adetula, A. A., & Fatusin, A. (2010). Prison as a school of crime: A case study of prisons in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(3), 205-210.
- Adetula, G. A., Adetula, A., & Fatusin, A. (2010). The prison subsystem culture: Its attitudinal effects on operatives, convicts and the free society. *IFE Psychologia: An International Journal*, 18(1), 206-220.
- Adikwu, A. I. (2025). An appraisal of the potentials of restorative justice as a panacea for cultism in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. *African Research Reports*, 1(5), 265-271.
- Agunyal, S. C., Ojokorotu, V., & Phago, K. (2024). Corruption and healthcare services in Nigerian prisons. *Research Gate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384752839_Corruption_and_Healthcare_Services_in_Nigerian_Prisons.
- Ahmad Bello University. (n.d.). Challenges of correctional service in Nigeria. *Journal Department of Criminology Ahmad Bello University, Zaria*.
- Ajah, S. O. (2018). Prison gangs in Nigeria: A sociological analysis. *Journal of Criminology and Forensic Studies*, 2(1), 1-15.
- AJOL. (2024). promoting alternatives to incarceration for effective criminal justice in Nigeria: A review of legal and policy framework. *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy*, 15(1), 1-17.
- Akers, R. L. (1973). Deviant behavior: A social learning approach. *Aldine*.
- Akers, R. L., & Burgess, R. L. (1966). A differential association-reinforcement theory of criminal behavior. *Social Problems*, 14(4), 128-147.
- Benjamin, B. (2018). Institutionalization and criminal identity: The cycle of recidivism.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. (n.d.). Corrections. U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/topics/corrections>
- Chukwumerije, O. (2012). Correctional Institution (Prison) and the Control of Recidivism among Ex-Convicts in Southwest Nigeria. *UM Journal of Social Science Research*, 6(1), 1-15.
- Copes, H., & Vieraitis, L. M. (2009). The process of inmate adaptation: Understanding how inmates negotiate prison life. *Justice Quarterly*, 26(4), 603-626.
- Dataphyte Insight. (2024). Overcrowding in Nigerian prisons. Retrieved from <https://dataphyte.com/tag/overcrowding-in-nigerian-prisons/>
- Decker, S. H., & van Wijk, A. (2012). The street gang: Cross-cultural patterns and definitions. *Wadsworth Cengage Learning*.
- Doc McKee. (2023). Criminal justice glossary. *The Free Press*.
- Eboh, A., & Aliu, A. O. (2019). Health expenditure, female employment, and educational attainment as predictors of maternal mortality in Nigeria: A retrospective study. *Ibadan Journal of Sociology*, 9(1), 1-13. Retrieved from https://www.ibadanjournalofsociology.org.ng/includes/ejsmstvwed?sid=15_2_1
- Encyclopedia.com. (2020). Criminal subcultures. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/criminal-subcultures>
- Essoh, P., Asangausung, O., & Peter, U. (2025). RECIDIVISM AND PUBLIC ORDER IN NIGERIAN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS IN AKWA IBOM STATE. *AKSU Annals of Sustainable Development*, 3(1), 14-34.
- Ezeji, C. L. (2025). Evaluating risk factors for criminal behaviors among youth and the responses of the criminal justice system and role players. *International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy* (2687-2293), 7(5), 199-216.
- Fiveable. (n.d.). Prison subcultures: The informal social structures formed by inmates. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://fiveable.me/ap-us-history/prison-subcultures-the-informal-social-structures-formed-by-inmates/>
- Fortune Journals. (n.d.). Prevalent diseases among inmates in three federal prisons in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria: A peep into the environmental factors. Retrieved from <http://www.fortunejournals.com/articles/prevalent-diseases-among-inmates-in-three-federal-prisons-in-southeast-geopolitical-zone-of-nigeria-a-peep-into-the-environmental.html>
- Goffman, E. (1968). *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. Aldine Publishing Company.
- GOV.UK. (n.d.). Prison and probation: Drug strategy. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-and-probation-drug-strategy>
- Ikoh, O. (2011). Prison environment and criminal behavior in Nigeria (Unpublished master's thesis). Texas Southern University. (As cited in Digital Scholarship@Texas Southern University, 2025).
- Ibadan Journal of Sociology. (2019). Health expenditure, female employment, and educational attainment as predictors of maternal mortality in Nigeria: A retrospective study. *Ibadan Journal of Sociology*, 9, Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387819381_Ibadan_Journal_of_Sociology_Ijs_Health_Expenditure_Female_Employment_And_Educational_Attainment_As_Predictors_Of_Maternal_Mortality_In_Nigeria_A_Retrospective_Study
- Ikoh O. (2011). Prison environment and criminal behavior in Nigeria. Retrieved from Digital Scholarship@Texas Southern University 2025, the Graduate Student Journal of Psychology, 7(1).
- Inderbitzin, M., & Regoli, R. M. (2007). *Street gangs: A quantitative and qualitative analysis*. Waveland Press.
- International Journal of Law and Criminology. (2022). Causes and consequences of inmate violence in Nigerian correctional facilities. *International Journal of Law and Criminology*, 10(3),
- Isiaka, M., Nasirudeen, I. A., Yusuf, T. A., Ayodele, A., & Sheu, W. B. (2025). The adoption of restorative justice models in criminal justice system: decongesting backlogs in conventional court system in Nigeria. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 28(4), 431-458.
- Ismaila, T. I., Umaru, M. E., & Yusuf, I. (2024). Analysis of subcultural misconduct as a barrier to effective rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration of inmates within the correctional facilities in Nigeria. *Madorawa Journal of Arts and Social Sciences (MAJASS)*, 56.
- Kofoworola, S. M., & Mohammed, Y. A. (2025). The Impact of Rehabilitation Programmers on Recidivism in Kuje Custodial Center, Abuja, Nigeria. *NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES*, 1(1), 217-228.
- LSData. (n.d.). Correctional institution. *LSData*. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.lsd.law/define/correctional-institution>
- Matsueda, R. L. (1988). The current state of differential association theory. *Crime & Delinquency*, 34(3), 277-306.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Correctional institution. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/correctional%20institution>
- National Institute of Justice. (n.d.). Recidivism. U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/corrections/recidivism>
- NCBI Bookshelf. (2021). *Sentencing and Corrections in the 21st Century: Roads to Reform*. National Academies Press. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK573295/>
- NIDA. (n.d.). Drug Facts: Prisons and jails. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prisons-and-jails>
- Obioha, E. E. (1995). Prison culture in Nigeria: A study of life within Agodi Prison Community, Ibadan (Master's thesis). Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan. As cited in *UM Journal*, 2024
- Ohazuluike, K. K., & Chikwendu, K. K. (2023). Overcrowding in Nigerian correctional facilities and its implications for human rights. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review*, 6(1), 123-138.
- Okoza, R. K., Olusola, B., & Adeyemi, O. (2019). The menace of cultism and gang activities in Nigerian prisons. *Journal of Security Studies and Criminal Justice*, 4(1), 78-90.
- Olabamiji, A. A. (2025). Prison Overcrowding in the Nigerian Correctional

- System: Implications for Offender Rehabilitation at the Ado-Ekiti Correctional Center. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(2), 14-34.
- Omoruyi, S., & Agbontaen, K. (2025). Socio-economic factors influencing recidivism among ex-offenders in Edo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Social and Policy Studies*, 15(1), 45-60.
- Otu, E. O. (2017). Stigmatization and reintegration: Ex-offenders' expectations of community re-entry. *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, 9(3), 112-125.
- Penal Reform International. (n.d.). Criminal subculture – Barrier to prisoner rehabilitation. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.penalreform.org/blog/criminal-subculture-barrier-to-prisoner-rehabilitation/>
- Premium Times. (2025). Nigeria's prison crisis: 67% of inmates awaiting trial.
- Rakis, S. (2005). *Recidivism: An international perspective*. Nova Science Publishers.
- Rehabilitation Initiative of Vulnerable Groups. (2020). World Health Organization (WHO). Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.who.int/initiatives/rehabilitation-2030>
- Research Gate. (2025). A statistical study of convicted and awaiting trial individuals in Nigeria (2025)"]. A statistical study of convicted and awaiting trial individuals in Nigeria (2025). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391601033_Statistical_Study_of_Convicted_and_Awaiting_Trial_Individuals_in_Nigeria_2025
- Sage Publishing. (2018). Theories of prison subculture. In *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Criminal Psychology*.
- Saylor, W. G., & Gaes, G. G. (1996). Adult recidivism and prior incarcerations: A national study. Federal Bureau of Prisons.
- Scribd. (2025) Correctional institution definition & goal. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.scribd.com/document/view/427952677/Correctional-Institution-Definition-Goal>
- Simply Psychology. (2025). Criminal subcultures. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/criminal-subcultures.html>
- Simply Psychology. (2025). Recidivism. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/recidivism.html>
- Soyombo, O. (2009). *Crime and punishment in Nigeria: A sociological analysis*. University of Ibadan Press.
- Sykes, G. M. (1958). *The society of captives: A study of a maximum-security prison*. Princeton University Press.
- TAU.edu.ng. (2025). Correctional/Custodial Center: An overview. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/recidivism.html>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). 2021-2023 Progress Report.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2022). 2021-2023 Progress Report. Retrieved from <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/progress-report/2021-2023-progress-report.html>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (n.d.). Handbook on the international transfer of sentenced persons.
- University of Chicago Journals. (2019). *the Journal of Law and Economics*, 62(1),
- UNODC. (2012). Handbook on prisoners with special needs. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- UNODC. (2022). 2021-2023 Progress Report. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- Unwobuesor, R. I., & Israel, V. U. (2023). Sewage management in correctional facilities and its public health implications in Rivers State, Nigeria. *Journal of Health, Applied Sciences and Management*, 7(1). Retrieved from <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/johasam/article/view/259512/245036>
- Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner. (2019). Understanding and tackling prison gangs. Retrieved May 28, 2025, from <https://www.warwickshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Understanding-and-tackling-prison-gangs.pdf>
- West African Journal of Open & Flexible Learning. (2017). Preventing Recidivism in Nigerian Prisons through Access to Education. *West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning*, 5(2), 136-145.
- Wright, K. (1994). *The criminal life: Views from the inside*. University of Michigan Press.