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# ATTITUDE OF INMATES TOWARDS THE PRISON LIBRARY: A PREDICTOR OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

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## Abstract

Information has been a veritable mechanism in the constant search for knowledge so as to attain developmental objectives. In the same vein, information is vital in the life of all individuals towards the realization of socio-political, economic, and developmental goals, it also serves just as the same importance for the survival of incarcerated persons. Adopting correlational study method, this study seeks to define the attitude of inmates towards the prison library and its effect on their psychological wellbeing. Two prisons – Port Harcourt Maximum Prison, Rivers State and Oko Prison, Benin City, Edo State, both in Nigeria, were selected for the study. From the population of convicted inmates in both prisons, 440 males and females were randomly sampled to generate data. A structured questionnaire divided into two sections – attitude scale and psychological wellbeing scale, was utilized in data collection. Out of the 440 sampled inmates, 393 responded correctly to the questionnaire resulting to 89% response rate. Data was collated and analyzed using descriptive analysis of mean and standard deviation, and linear regression. The results indicated that inmates in both prisons have positive attitude towards the prison library, and they also, are psychologically adjusted in prison. The result also revealed that there is a high positive relationship between inmates' attitude towards the prison library and their psychological wellbeing ( $r = .540$ ). The study concludes that bibliotherapy can further enhance the effectiveness of other reformation and rehabilitative programs for inmates, and therefore, recommends that the penal system should embrace bibliotherapy as a rehabilitation program for the reformation and rehabilitation of societal offenders.

**Keywords:** Penal system, prison library, inmates, information, attitude, bibliotherapy, psychological wellbeing.

## 1 Introduction

A library is a body of collected information brought together for the purposes of knowledge acquisition, preservation, management, dissemination and utilization. Thus, the library is seen as a power house held in reserve where information is collected, stored, processed, and retrieved for use. From time immemorial, humankind has found in information as a veritable instrument in the constant search for knowledge to attain developmental goals, by utilizing information as a vital tool for finding solutions to problems. Information is, therefore, the driving force for societal growth and advancement. Iloje (2001) submits that information is the heart of the world developments. Just as information is a key in the life of all individuals' human capacity building for optimal development and for the realization of socio-political and economic activities, so also it serves for the survival of convicted persons, during incarceration. Little wonder then, that the prison libraries have been closely associated with rehabilitative functions (Fyfe, 1992). Marshall (2011) opined that "prison libraries serve both the prisoners and the public by helping to educate prisoners, reduce recidivism, and improve on family bonds through reading" (p.122).

It must be emphasized that these individuals are cut off from the outside world, therefore, meaningful access to information is vital, because it serves as a means of connection from their confined spaces to the larger communities. Research shows a correlation between information resources and reduced recidivism, and the library plays an important role in supporting education (Costanzo and Montecchi, 2011). Through education, inmates obtain skills necessary for transiting back into society upon release. Prison libraries play an important role in educating inmates through such programmes as literacy classes, life skill classes, storytelling, group discussion, typing instruction, and classes on library use for personal development (Curry et al., 2003). Prison education is a sine qua non for inmates as it does not only train them with the ability to read and write, it also broadens and deepens their perceptual acuity for meaningful rehabilitation. It is in this regard that the need and importance of a prison library becomes eminent. As outlined by the 1955 United Nations (UN) standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, prison education goes beyond formal educational objectives. It entails activities such as academic, vocational, drug and alcohol treatment, self-help/support groups, mental/sexual/physical health classes, college courses, and employment training, designed to impact on general life perception. In other sense, prison education plays a substitution role in

behaviour modification of inmates from their vicious amusements (Wines 1871). Consequently, the library serves to connect inmate to information resources beyond what they are exposed to in formal educational activities, particularly as it relates to behaviour change. The Rule Forty (40) of the *United Nations Standard Minimal Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1955)*, therefore, stipulates that “every institution shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it”. This explains the confluence between prison education and prison library, as both complement the purpose of the other. Hence, education in prison will not be purposeful without the prison library, vice versa.

With the benefits of the prison library as a reformatory tool to inmates, it becomes pertinent to ascertain how inmates perceive the prison library, as data obtained from such study would be beneficial to prison researchers. According to Kjelsberg, Skoglund and Rustad (2007) the inmates' attitudes towards their fellow prisoners, and indeed the inmates' attitudes toward themselves, i.e. their self-esteem, are important factors in predicting their psychological well-being. This is because such attitude is likely to influence the way prisoners respond to correctional measures and the over-all effectiveness of the various rehabilitation programs offered in that institution. In addition, whether rehabilitation would be successful will also depend upon the attitude held by the society into which the prisoner will be released.

The prison environment is psychologically taxing, and researches on attitude in prisons have focused mainly on prison authorities, while that of the inmates has been sparsely investigated (Kjelsberg, Skoglund and Rustad, 2007). Perhaps, the society has written them off entirely. However, attitude of inmates and their library-use behaviour has a close-knit relationship that the former has a far-reaching effect on their entire well-being. Stevens (1995) agreed to this view when he concluded that there has been a failure to all parties to fully realize the rehabilitative potential of the prison library. Information for rehabilitative purposes as the primary function of prison libraries cannot be effective or achieved if inmates lack receptive attitudes towards the prison library. The foregoing, therefore, necessitated the study of the attitude of prison inmates towards the prison library and its effect on their psychological well-being.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Incidence of recidivism among convicted persons has been the concern of many, particularly correctional scholars. This raises the question of what effect rehabilitation programmes have on inmates vis-a-vis the role of the prison as a social institution for reforming offenders. This situation, therefore, leaves one but to

state that the prison system has failed in its primary objective of rehabilitation, thus, encouraging criminality among erstwhile inmates. This scenario has degenerated to the further perpetuation of crime and increase of more hardened criminally minded segment of citizens in the society. Rehabilitation programmes in prisons cannot be said to be effective with recidivism on the increase. Numerous questions have been raised concerning the effectiveness of prisons rehabilitative programmes, such as the performance of prison officials, good prison practice, treating inmates with respect, trust and dignity, as contributing factors to the non-realization of prisons' main objectives towards total rehabilitation, hence, recidivism remains unabated. This study recognizes inmates as individuals capable of effecting their own reformation if properly guided to focus on their attitude towards the prison library as a predictor of their psychological well-being. Attitude determines the total person; it reflects the individual's disposition towards their situation in life which can be transformed for positive realization of goals. Attitude is everything about the extent to which people succeed in life; it is summarily the prescriber of human behavior. Therefore, the problem of this study is to examine how prison inmates perceive the library and its effect on their psychological well-being.

## 2 Review of Literature

Prisons were first set up for punitive measures against offenders. Records indicate that the Philadelphia Prison Society in the United States played a significant role as they provided books to the Walnut Street Jail in the 1790's. It was, however, not until the 1840's that concrete steps were taken to extend the frontiers of prison libraries. Saunders (1966) reports that prison library services in the United Kingdom were very closely linked to the concepts of education and reformation of that era. After the prison Act of 1877, attention was given to prisoners' education and basic instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. Shirley (2003) adds that further developments in correctional library services were fueled by the American Library Association (ALA). In the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many prison libraries were run by the clergy to increase devotion and reduce crimes. State prison libraries were established in the early to mid-1800s containing mostly religious and temperance materials. According to Engelbart (1972), “it is probably that practically all the books in these libraries were theological in nature and were designed to compel prisoners to contemplate the eternal sufferings to which they would be subjected if they did not repent” (pp.13-14).

A library within a prison differs greatly from a library outside the custodial environment. It has a different clientele group, with very different needs. There are particular materials that it must stock and certain things of restrictive nature that must be controlled. Access to

the prison library may be strictly monitored or supervised by uniform prison officials. The prison librarian must interact with, on the one hand, people who have committed crimes so serious that the courts have considered them as threats to societal peace and must be isolated from the rest of society, and on the other hand, a range of professional people with a multiplicity of information demands. Prison libraries have always been closely involved with rehabilitation (Fyfe, 1992).

In addition, prison libraries can educate inmate on building a positive and meaningful bond with their family members. For example, Gerken (2003) opined that most prison libraries have rehabilitative programs in which prisoners are recorded reading stories, and the tapes and books, along with a coloring book and crayons, which are then sent to their children. Also, some inmates try to read the similar books their children are reading, and by doing so they have something to talk about with them (Darby, 2004). Indeed, prison libraries exert positive influence on inmates' lives, as it serves as a haven within prison which is invaluable to many inmates. The prison library provides a place of escape from the harsh realities of prison life, a place to reflect on one's life, growth, and where to find peace, and a place to productively spend free time (Greenway, 2007). Some prison libraries also seek to alter behavior by having book discussion groups and bibliotherapy services (Gerken, 2003).

Stern (1989) explained that:

The extent of their contributions, however, has been determined by two principal factors, the kind of rehabilitative model which was in use at any time and the changing objectives of libraries themselves. The earlier models adopted a person-centered approach, whereby remedying moral shortfalls and anti-social characteristics of the individual were the key factors in modifying criminal behavior (p.45).

Originally, information behaviour professionals believe in the use of information to trigger change in behaviour. Such that the provision of information resources to users is to achieve educational objectives (change in behaviours of learners). Thus, the success of an educational organization depends on the provision of information resources to its human resources. Consequently, Mubashrah, Riaz and Shaziah (2013) noted that the library provides resources which are essential to support and strengthen educational quality. Wilson (2000) described information behavior as the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information-seeking, and information use. Various authors have propounded models of information behaviour and prominent among them according to Oladunjoye, Ojunga, and Yomi-Owojori, (2018) are "Wilson's model of Information Behavior (1981, 1999, 2000); Ellis's behavioral model for information system design (1989); Kuhlthau's information-seeking model (1993);

Johnson and Meischke's comprehensive model of information-seeking (1993); Marchionini's information seeking in electronic environments model (1995); Bates's berrypicking model (1989); Ingwersen's cognitive IR interaction model (1992;1996); Saracevic's stratified interactive IR model (1996); Spink's search process model (1997); Choobehavioral model for the web (2000); Broder's standard model of the search process (2002); Fisher, Fisher and Harman's (2003) information – motivation – behavioral skills model; Knight and Spink's macro model of human IR behavior on the web (2008); Omiunu (2014); Ohtoshi-Gottschalg-Duque's Model of Information Behavior (2016); among others." However, the models all specified that information behavior consists of users' information needs, seeking and sources (sourcing and the perception), and use. Consequently, Wilson (2000) asserted that information use behavior consists of the physical and mental acts involved in incorporating the information found into the person's existing knowledge base. The author further explained that this maybe mental act that involve, for example, comparison of new information with existing knowledge.

However, this study took the psychological direction to consider the mental aspect of information behaviour, considering attitude as variable of interest. Attitude is believed to contribute a lot to information use behaviour of individuals. Considering two distinct models of attitude – Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, and Behavioural Model comprising of theorists like B.F Skinner, Edward Lee Thorndike, and Ivan B. Pavlov, among others.

Albert Ellis (1987) adopted a cognitive-behavioural approach in resolving emotional and behavioural problems and disturbances to help people lead a happier and more fulfillin lives. Consequently, Ellis structured a model known as ABC model explaining the role attitude plays in creating a pleasant or unpleasant experience/s for the bearer. The model specifies that there is an event (A), there is attitude or perception (B) held towards the event, and the consequence (C) of the event as interpreted by the perception of the individual. In this regard, when an inmate finds himself/herself in the prison environment, such inmate is faced with the challenging environment of the prison system. However, it is the interpretation the inmate ascribed to his/her current situation will determine whether such inmate would adjust well or gets worst. Ellis's believe is akin to that of Greek philosopher Epictetus in the *Enchiridion* that thus; "men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them" Shakespeare rephrased the statement centuries later in his *Hamlet* as "there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so".

The behaviourist in their methods involving reinforcement, punishment, response to stimuli, and conditioning, they all agreed upon an intended action and an

outcome. In this discourse, the inmate have to make a deliberate effort toward learning or acquiring information for behavioural change. Thus, effort is a behaviour guided by attitude towards the object of interest, therefore, if there is a positive attitude there would be a positive outcome vice versa.

Other models have taken a situationist approach, where changing the environment is the principal determinant (McGuire & Priestley, 1985). The interactionist school argues that both the offender and their environment should be considered when developing reformative interventions (Lillyquist, 1980). Huff (1987) opined that “current theory tends to favour a cognitive-behavioural model, where criminality is a result of inadequacies in social skills and distorted perceptions, brought about by factors such as faulty social learning or immersion in a negative sub-culture” (p.33). That there has been such a succession of paradigms indicates the complexities of the issues involved in most reformation models. Most criminologists today would argue there is no quick fix solution to the question of offender rehabilitation (Lillyquist, 1980). Furthermore, as there are many influences which contribute to criminal behaviour, so also there are elements in each of the models of reformative interventions which may need to be adopted to suit individual’s settings.

Prior to 1900, criminality was correlated with a lack of moral and spiritual precepts. Providing appropriate reading materials to remedy these defects were thought to be of great significance – the convict, quite literally, was a ‘moral defective’. For instance, at Millbank the chaplain whose name was Daniel Nihil, had those prisoners, who exhibited no strong interest in reading the Bible, sermons or other religious literature, whipped or removed to dark cells where they might languish for periods of up to three weeks (Engelbarts, 1972). The chaplains who distributed these reading materials were almost always zealous religious reformists and they took great care that the texts they selected for their charges accentuated positive values. For example, at Lincoln County Gaol was to be found ‘The Pious Christian’s Daily Preparation’ and ‘Syneg’s Answers to all excuses for not coming to the Holy Communion.’ At Brixton there was ‘The Evil Consequences of Attending the Race Course’, ‘Missionary Records of China’ and ‘A Peep into The Gin Shop’ (Report of the Directors of Convict Prisoners, 1853, in Forsythe, 1987).

Book collections began to develop on an ad hoc basis within each institution to serve a defined purpose. By 1850, most of the larger prisons had their own libraries containing religious and moral texts (Forsythe, 1987). Parkhurst for example, had a library of over 600 books aimed at providing a religious and moral foundation to a virtuous life of the inmates. Books of an educational nature were gradually reduced, as they were considered

to unrealistically raise inmate’s expectations of the nature of future employment. Recreational reading was not permitted – only those items which were considered would induce ethical or moral change was allowed. Coyle (1987) argues that during this period the prison library derived its legitimacy from its role as resource for religious and moral improvement. In this sense, the library’s function was compatible, indeed, synonymous with the objectives of the institution.

During the 1914-18 war, six thousand mainly middle class, conscientious objectors had been jailed, while imprisoned suffragettes also drew attention to the plight of women inmates. As a result, attention began to be focused on the conditions within the English prisons. This formed the background to the publication, in 1922 of ‘English Prisons Today’, written by two conscientious objectors who had suffered imprisonment - Stephen Hobhouse (a Quaker) and Fenner Brockway (editor of the Independent Labour Party’s ‘Labour Leader’). This book helped initiate major changes in the penal system. Within a few years, the prison crop, the broad arrow uniform and the silence rule had all been abolished, while limited association between inmates and even entertainment were introduced. Emphasis began to be placed on restoring the criminal to a previous condition, rather than on changing them into law-abiding citizens (Coyle, 1987). The idea that the criminal could be reformed through punishment, isolation and contemplation was gradually rejected. It was now advocated that rehabilitation of the individual could be achieved through meaningful work and training, but principally through education (Brockway, 1912). Again, this model provided the library with both a rationale and legitimacy, although the role of the library was still very clearly defined by the prison authorities. Banks (1958) asserts that;

In addition to educational materials, the libraries were only to permit very restricted types of recreational reading which would help lead to moral improvement. Any literature which did not contain this kind of implicit message was not regarded in any sense rehabilitative, and considered to be ‘mental dope’ and indicative of sloth (p. 225).

Thus, in 1931, the National Society for Penal Reform argued that as for crime and mystery stories, it is undoubtedly wise to reduce them to a minimum in the prison library. They argued that efforts should be directed towards substituting reading interests in adventure books dealing with exploration, the sea and pioneer life for interests in the detective and crime stories which the average citizen outside the prison reads constantly, and which the prisoner wishes to read (Banks, 1958).

Based on the above, the inmate’s interest in visiting the prison library to read becomes an important factor during rehabilitation. Interest is chiefly shaped by attitude. The attitude towards an object or an idea deter-

mines the interest rate given to it by individuals, same goes for the attitude of inmates towards the prison library. Human behaviour is the product of acquired attitude which help to shape the disposition towards events or phenomena. Attitude is learned disposition towards an object or event acquired through learning and experiences, it cannot be seen but is observed through behaviour, and perseveres over time. It is important to acknowledge that attitude is a learned response which is influenced by many environmental factors (Fiske, Gilbert, Lindzey, 2010).

The prison environment, thus, offers in its own, an entire system of belief upon the inmates. This extends to their perception and reaction (attitude) to events in the prison environment. Buttressing this point, Field (1931) opined that “when a body of relatively uneducated men live together in close association, almost invariably, a high degree of uniformity in behaviour is induced by community pressure. This is particularly true of a prison group” (p. 150). The delineated above suggests that, new attitude can be acquired while in the prison environment. Therefore, librarians across the globe have often championed the course for the establishment of fully-functional libraries in correctional institutions. Emasealu (2015) posited that there is significant relationship between information needs, and psychological well-being of the inmates. However, the dilapidated and ill-equipped nature of Nigerian prisons does not or minimally support the emotional rehabilitation of incarcerated offenders. The prison environment as a correctional facility, should promote rehabilitation and prevention of crime, rather than being a passive hoarding environment for societal offenders. Consequently, progress in the rehabilitation of offenders implies something much broader than incarceration as such the prison system offers variety of rehabilitation programs for inmates.

Attitude is a construct of many factors, in fact, most social psychologists consider attitude to be related to several affective aspects as well such as the individual's self-esteem, values, feelings, and interests (Cothem and Collins, 1992). Rosenberg (1966) therefore, explained that attitude consists of cognitive and affective components. The individual's beliefs about an act and its outcomes; the act itself; and about the social expectations of others and the motivation to conform to them, are the three factors inherent in individuals that affect attitude (McKenna, 1994). According to Harrell (2005), learning to monitor, control and tap into a positive attitude is the key to every self-help process. She further explained that attitude is the fundamental principle for self-development and personal growth. It, therefore, could be concluded that attitude is everything about individuals and the cornerstone upon which behaviour and actions are established.

Having realized the importance of information resources in the reformation and rehabilitation of inmates, their attitude towards the prison library becomes a crucial factor in rehabilitation. Understanding the role of attitude in changing people is principally for two reasons. Adopting the reasons by McKenna (1994) towards readers, first, attitude may affect the level of ability ultimately attained by a given individual through its influence on such factors as engagement and practice. The rehabilitation of inmates is a conscious process that requires the inmate who is at the center of the rehabilitation to realize himself as someone that needs help. Thus, developing positive attitude towards engaging and practicing reformation steps is crucial. Second, even for the self-assured inmates, poor attitude may occasion a choice not to accept change. This is true of inmates who may have mastered and control their emotions and thought-processes. Without positive attitude towards the prison rehabilitation, they are unlikely to internalize the programmes – a process of wholeheartedly embracing the reformatory programmes with the intention to benefit from it than just passive participation. On this note, it is essential to point out that reading has been advocated for in reformation process by several authors, as it has been correlated positively with achievement in the life of individuals. The love and emotion towards reading, according to the studies above, is controlled by the attitude of a reader.

Pretorius (2008) asserted that reading is significant to success and achievement. Therefore, the attitude of inmates toward reading is important. Consequently, government and prison officials recognizing that attitude toward reading/library is learned responses, need to determine the types of motivation that might improve attitude and consequently, reading behaviours and achievement.

The prison milieu presents a range of challenges, including stressors such as feeling of isolation, loss of privacy and freedom, boredom, personal threats and overcrowded living conditions (Wilfey, Rondon, and Anderson, 1986). Consequently, it could be deduced that inmates are physically and mentally tasked in their reactions to stressors existing in the prison environment. Otu, Otu and Eteng (2013) listed depression, loneliness, nervousness, withdrawal, self-estrangement, loss of privacy, boredom, gossip, jealousy, hostility and personal threats, as factors leading to upheaval in self-perception and psychological well-being. According to Agbakwuru and Ibe-Godfrey (2016):

Incarceration serves four essential purposes with regards to offenders: to isolate criminals to prevent them from committing more crimes, to punish criminals for committing crimes, to deter others from committing crimes, and to rehabilitate criminals. Other reasons they summarized are the need to pro-

tect the life of the incarcerated person, to safeguard public interest, or when the bail conditions have not yet been satisfied (p. 81-82).

Modern penal management techniques emphasized reform of the inmates or the convicts, to see improvement from the perspective of reform and rehabilitation rather than the perspective of punishment. Agbakwuru and Ibe-Godfrey (2016) cautioned that incarceration should be seen from the perspective of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration rather than punishment. In view of this, Ayuk *et al.* (2013) pointed out that despite Nigeria's progress on democratic, economic and political reforms Nigeria's prisons are yet to make appreciable impact on the welfare of the inmates. They further asserted that there is more to imprisonment than opening and closing of prison gates.

Consequently, the morbid nature of Nigeria's prisons leaves one in doubt, with too many questions left unanswered; the rate at which released inmates repeatedly perpetrate heinous crime and violence more than ever, before life behind bars, has cast aspersions on the functions and relevance of social reintegration or rehabilitation programmes in Nigerian prisons. A report from Punchng.com in 2015, reported that recidivism is one of the greatest challenges of the country's criminal justice system. Interestingly prison remains indispensable in correcting, reforming and rehabilitating convicts in most societies particularly, Nigeria. The report further explained that the "rate of recidivism was 35% in 2007, 44% in 2008 and 52.4% in 2010, and recent study showed that the rate of recidivism currently stands at 68%. In other words, out of every 1,000 individuals convicted in Nigeria, 680 will likely be back in the prison." It is, therefore, necessary that the social, vocational, educational and psychological well-being aspect of human life capable of affecting overall well-being of inmates be cared for in Nigerians prisons. Accordingly, the study attempts to draw attention to the psychosocial well-being of inmates who are first and foremost a human person. This study also adopts the idea of Mefoh *et al.* (2016) to assert that the idea of reforming an offender should not just be focused only on building more prisons, improving the living conditions and/or medical needs of prisoners, but it should also look in terms of understanding the psychological variables that might lead to social progress and improvement in the quality of life of prisoners.

Wellness according to the World Health Organization's definition is more than just a physical issue. Emotional and social dimensions of wellness are just as important (Archer *et al.* in Hermon and Hazler, 1999). Psychological well-being is a construct of overall well-being of an individual.

Hermon and Hazler (1999) defined psychological well-being as:

an internal focused method of attaching value to the quality of life and effective experience generally accepted as a scientific construct with long-term (propensity or disposition) and short term (mood) components similar in design to the trait state distinction in anxiety (p.38).

The phenomenon of psychological well-being has an enduring implication to emotional health and physical well-being of every individual. It is believed to be a key factor crucial for the development and utilization of inert strength. Roughly, it is an accumulated effect resulting from experiences, life styles, and personality types (holistic approach) of the individual.

Psychological well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives. According to Diener (1997), these evaluations may be in the form of cognitions or in the form of affect. The cognitive part is an information-based appraisal of one's life, that is, when a person gives conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life. The affective part is a hedonic evaluation guided by emotions and feelings such as frequency with which people experience pleasant/unpleasant moods in reaction to their lives. The assumption behind this is that most people evaluate their life as either good or bad, so they are normally able to offer judgments. Furthermore, people invariably experience moods and emotions, which have a positive effect or a negative effect. Thus, people have a level of subjective well-being even if they do not often consciously think about it, and the psychological system offers virtually a constant evaluation of what is happening to the person.

Carol Ryff, the proponent of the psychological well-being, revered two distinct theories of prominent psychologist: Carl Rogers (Client-centered theory) and Abraham Maslow (Motivation theory). Rogers (1959), a prominent psychologist in his Humanistic Approach (Client-centered theory), assumes that the interpretation one gives to situations (stressors) that encircle him determines his psychological state (well-being) – interpretation is largely influenced by the amount of information an individual is disposed to. He opined that the approach to assisting individuals entails the act of giving valued information to those that lack it and need it for better understanding of self, environment and informed decision making. Information, therefore, has the capacity of affecting positively, the psychological aspects of every human being. In the light of this, Rogers asserts that for information to be effective, it must be current, adequate in scope and appropriate for users of information. This is true because as the society becomes more complex, it becomes very necessary to provide the opportunity for inmates to take advantage of adequate and accurate information through the prison library to enable them make decisions as they proceed through their new status and become well adjusted.

Abraham Maslow (1954), in his theory of human motivation categorized levels of attainments an individual must obtain before there can be self-actualization. Self-actualization is a construct he portrayed as a stage of psychological well-being. He asserted that Self-actualizing people indicate a coherent personality syndrome and represent optimal psychological health and functioning. A person enjoys 'peak experiences', high points in life when the individual is in harmony with himself and his surroundings. In Maslow's view, self-actualized people can have many peak experiences throughout a day while others have those experiences less frequently. He realized that all the individuals he studied had similar personality traits. All were 'reality centered,' able to differentiate what was fraudulent from what was genuine. They were also 'problem centered', meaning that they treated life's difficulties as problems that demanded solutions. These individuals also were comfortable being alone and had healthy personal relationships. They had only a few close friends and family rather than a large number of shallow relationships. These self-actualized individuals were very independent and private when it came to their environment and culture, especially their very own individual development on potentialities and inner resources. He therefore concluded that self-actualizing people tend to focus on problems outside themselves; have a clear sense of what is true and what is false; are spontaneous and creative; and are not bound too strictly by social conventions. This led up to the formulation of 'Maslow's Hammer' in 1966, which he literary explained as, "if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail."

In this regard, based on the believe according to Maslow that every person has a strong desire to realize his/her full potential, the library provides information to fulfill information needs of inmates in various supervised capacity in order of priority. Thus, promoting the motivation for self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, mastery of the prison environment, autonomy and positive relation to others in the prison, all culminating in self-actualization.

Consequently, the above informed the decision to base this study on the six constructs of psychological well-being, which according to Ryff (1989), are:

- a. Self-acceptance
- b. Personal growth
- c. Purpose in life
- d. Environmental mastery
- e. Autonomy
- f. Positive relation with others

#### Self-Acceptance

A situation whereby inmates possess positive attitude toward themselves, acknowledge and accept every aspect of their life including both past and present;

good and bad qualities, and feel positive about their current life position. They, therefore, could be said to have accepted themselves which is another crucial factor in rehabilitative process.

#### Personal Growth

When inmates acquire the feeling for continued development; see themselves as reforming and expanding; are open to new experiences; have the sense of realizing their potential; see improvement in their daily routine and behavior over time; are changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.

#### Purpose in Life

When inmates have outlined goals in life and a sense of directedness; feel there is meaning to their present life; hold beliefs that give life purpose; and have aims and objectives for living.

#### Environmental Mastery

When inmates have sense of mastery and competence in rational management of their present environment; control complex array of external activities; make effective use of the surrounding opportunities; and are able to choose or create contexts suitable to their personal needs and values.

#### Autonomy

When inmates are self-determining and independent; are able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulate their behavior from within; and most importantly, evaluate themselves by personal standards in line with standards in conformity with societal norms.

#### Positive Relations with Others

When there is a warm, satisfying, trusting relationship among inmates; the rare ability to be genuinely concerned about the welfare of others; display of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; and understand the give and take of human relationships.

The above are obtainable in the prison environment, when inmates develop a positive attitude towards prison libraries and information resources therein as rehabilitative intervention to assist them in various capacities as explained below.

#### 2.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study include:

- a. To examine the attitude of prison inmates towards the prison library,
- b. To measure the psychological well-being of prison inmates using the six constructs of psychological well-being,
- c. To establish the relationship between attitude of prison inmates and their psychological well-being.

Based on the objectives above, this paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the attitude of prison inmates towards the prison library?
2. Using the six-construct of Ryff's psychology well-being, what is the level of psychological well-being of prison inmates?
3. What is the relationship between attitude of prison inmates towards the prison library and their psychological well-being?

#### 4 Methodology

The paper adopted descriptive survey design to study the attitude of inmates towards the prison library. The study was carried out in two selected prisons, Port Harcourt Maximum Prison, Rivers State and Oko Prison Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria with prison libraries. The target population of this study comprised of prison inmates. A sample of 393 prison inmates of both sexes were randomly selected from only convicted inmates in the two prisons.

The researcher utilized a self-constructed questionnaire for data collection. Two set of questionnaires was designed to assess psychological well-being using the Ryff's six construct of psychological well-being (1989). While the other one was designed to assess the attitude of inmates towards the prison library. The Items were constructed to reflect positive feelings about the library by inmates.

For data collection, ethical standards were strictly adhered to. The researcher obtained permission from the prison headquarters, and the prisoners right to accept or decline participation was respected. The researcher upon careful explanation on how to respond to the questionnaire, administered the instrument on a face-to-face basis to the inmates.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation, and linear regression.

#### 5 Results and discussion

The population of the inmates, sample size, number, and response rate are represented in Table I (Appendix A), while the demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table II (Appendix B).

The Table II shows the findings on the attitude of inmates towards the prison library. From the findings, it could be discerned that inmates have positive attitude towards the prison library as shown from the obtained grand mean of 2.60 ( $2.60 \geq 2.50$ ). Out of the 20 items tested, inmates accepted 13 items (1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 19), and rejected 7 items (2, 5, 6, 10, 12, 17, and 20) (See table 2 above). This means that the weight of the accepted items is higher than the

rejected items. The items having a positive structure generally garnered a grand mean of 2.60 higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, hence, the positive attitude. This finding agrees with the position of Bajic (2015), that prisoners have positive attitudes towards the prison library as they enjoy reading books or newspapers. The reason for this could not be far-fetched from the very importance of information in every human endeavour. Having realized the impact information (social, legal, educative, and decision-making ability) could have in their life, inmates now value information even more while in prison. To this end, majority of inmates reported that they partake in reading books as a favorite leisure activity (Bajic, 2015). Therefore, the prison library is a necessity for which inmates should develop positive attitude for, towards successful reformation and reintegration. In support of this, McKenna (1994) asserted that developing positive attitude towards engaging and practicing reformation steps is crucial, because, even for the self-assured inmates, poor attitude may occasion a choice not to accept change. He further explained that without positive attitude towards the prison rehabilitation programs, they are unlikely to internalize the programs.

Ryff's six construct of psychological well-being (1989) was utilized to test the psychological well-being of inmates in the analysis above (Table III Appendix C). The inmates accepted items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, and 26, while they rejected items 4, 5, 6, 12, 14, 19, 21, 22, and 24 (see Table IV Appendix D above). The tested items culminated to a grand mean of 2.53 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 ( $2.53 \geq 2.50$ ). The conclusion drawn from this finding is that inmates have high psychological well-being. Earlier findings have shown that there is a positive attitude towards the prison library by inmates. This suggested the connection between utilization of information resources and psychological well-being of inmates. In support of this, Emasealu and Popoola (2016) posited that variety of library information resources should be made available in prison libraries to further enhance the psychological well-being of inmates.

The crux of this study is to determine the effect of the attitude of inmates towards the library prison on their psychological wellbeing. The result from Table V (Appendix E) shows the relationship between the library attitude of inmates and their psychological well-being. Correlating inmates and the six-construct of psychological wellbeing, it was established that inmates' library attitude relates with: self-acceptance with 0.65 correlation coefficient; personal grow with 0.58; purpose in life with -0.04; environmental mastery with 0.53; autonomy with 0.29; and positive relation with others with -0.92 relation coefficients. This finding means that self-acceptance, personal growth, and environmental mastery of the construct of psychological wellbeing are indeed related to inmates' library



attitude and are being influenced in some way positive or negative by this relationship shared. Meanwhile, the rest (purpose in life, autonomy, and positive relation with others) are not related to inmates' library attitude. However, an F score of 2.689 was obtained which is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $F:2.689: \text{Sig}= 0.01 \leq p=0.05$ ). Thus, library attitude of inmate influences their psychological wellbeing.

To determine the direction and extent of the influence, the model summary (Table VI Appendix F), an R value of .650 was obtained which is statistically significant at .05 alpha level ( $R= .650 \leq p=.05$ ). This shows that the relationship is positive. Also, the adjusted R value was obtained as .540, this shows that library attitude of inmates account for 54% (.540 x 100) change in their psychological wellbeing. Therefore, as the attitude of inmates towards the prison library improves, their psychological well-being improves and a negative attitude towards the library begets a mal-adjustment in their psychological wellbeing. Consequently, Henry (2010) and Mfum (2012) noted that the role of information as an important tool for the physical and psychological survival of convicted persons cannot be relegated to the background. Similarly, reading, as a powerful tool (for acquisition of information and knowledge), takes special significance for inmates; reading not only builds their knowledge and vocabulary base but it also develops their capacity for internal reflection – a crucial skill often lacking among the incarcerated (Jordet, 2008).

## 5 Conclusion

From time immemorial, information has been described as a veritable instrument in the attainment of overall developmental goals of individuals. Libraries are, therefore, established to cater for the information needs of all, especially the disadvantaged group of the society. Prison libraries are established to support the prison education system and ultimately assist inmates reconstruct their psyche (rehabilitation) and reduce recidivism among ex-offenders through bibliotherapy for successful and meaningful transition into the society upon release. The prison library offers services such as literary classes, life skill classes, storytelling, group discussion, typing instruction and library use instruction among others. The role of information as an important tool for the physical and psychological survival of convicted persons cannot be relegated to the background as, it not only builds their knowledge and vocabulary but, also, develop their capacity for internal reflection – a crucial skill often lacking among the incarcerated persons. Indeed, the prison library provides a haven for inmate, however, successful integration of these rehabilitation programmes depends on the attitudes of the receivers (inmates). Attitude determines the total person, it reflects the individual's disposition towards their situation in life, as it is summarily, the

prescriber of human behaviour. Based on this realization, the study concludes that books in the prison library play an assistive role in the psychological disposition of inmates. This has a direct impact on the assimilation of rehabilitative programmes in prisons. It, therefore, supposes that the more inmates develop positive attitude towards the prison library, the more psychologically balanced they become; and the more other rehabilitative programmes such as skill acquisition, education, and vocational training among others can have a pronounced effect on the reformation and rehabilitation of societal offenders, thus, a sound reformatory penal system through bibliotherapy. The study, therefore, recommends the use of books (bibliotherapy) in the reformation of offenders, and the conscious reconstruction of the attitude of inmates towards successful rehabilitation in prisons.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

Prison libraries	Total Population of convicted inmates	Sample Size	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Port Harcourt Maximum Prison (Rivers State)	345	240	262 <sup>1</sup>	66.7
Oko Prison, Benin Prison (Edo State)	270	200	131	33.3
Total	615	440	393	100

**Table I. The study population and sampled prison inmates**

<sup>1</sup> the number of responses exceeded the sample size

## Appendix B

SN	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD	Decision
1	I appreciate the prison library	190	80	66	57	3.03	0.01	Accepted
2	Visiting the prison library advantageous to my rehabilitation	251	43	44	55	3.25	.76	Rejected
3	I get a sense of with the outside world through information obtained in the library	65	204	71	53	2.72	.94	Accepted
4	I am overly satisfied with the services in the prison library	60	230	52	51	2.76	.90	Accepted
5	It is worthwhile taking extra time to visit the library	59	136	48	150	2.26	.82	Rejected
6	I like to take advantage of the library to acquire new knowledge	45	131	59	158	2.16	.79	Rejected
7	I feel the state should invest more in stocking prison libraries	31	271	40	51	2.72	.85	Accepted
8	Despite tight prison schedule I often find time to use the library	50	226	61	56	2.69	.75	Accepted
9	Library visitation should be a part of prison time table	30	285	26	52	2.75	.90	Accepted
10	I would recommend library to another inmate	19	200	18	156	2.21	.66	Rejected
11	I believe that the prison library can facilitate learning in prison	12	314	17	50	2.73	.58	Accepted
12	Prison library services should be mandatory in every prison	13	215	15	150	2.23	.53	Rejected
13	The prison library is fun and educative to me	41	251	51	50	2.72	.51	Accepted
14	Using the library improves my effectiveness in prison daily challenges	64	180	63	86	2.56	.78	Accepted
15	I believe it is easy to get any information needed from the prison library	48	212	52	81	2.58	0.05	Accepted
16	Materials in the prison library make me improve on my behavior	29	284	30	50	2.74	0.01	Accepted
17	I would rather observe detention in the prison library than in my cell block	21	183	39	150	2.19	.71	Rejected
18	Important prison life adjustment information can be gotten from the prison library	15	272	31	75	2.58	.77	Accepted
19	The presence of the prison library represents the commitment of the state in respecting our undeniable human rights	41	281	21	50	2.80	.90	Accepted
20	I completely understand and agree with the presence of prison library.	35	196	12	150	2.30	.72	Rejected
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Grand mean</b>				<b>2.60</b>	<b>≥ 2.50</b>	<b>Positive</b>

Table II. Attitude of inmates towards of the prison library N= 393

## Appendix C

S/ N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	SD	Decision
1	I have self confidence	55	164	100	74	2.51	2.06	Accepted
2	I feel that others love me and appreciate me	67	150	95	81	2.52	1.66	Accepted
3	I felt satisfied with what I am able to accomplish, feel proud of myself	23	214	141	15	2.62	1.91	Accepted
4	I feel useful with myself and others	53	140	125	75	2.44	1.51	Rejected
5	I feel emotionally balanced	61	137	65	130	2.33	1.77	Rejected
6	I am true to myself being natural at all times	48	168	99	78	2.47	1.47	Rejected
7	I live at normal pace, not doing anything excessively	55	213	75	50	2.69	1.27	Accepted
8	My life is well balanced between my family, personal and prison activities	50	183	75	85	2.50	1.40	Accepted
9	I have goals and ambitions	43	175	150	25	2.60	2.20	Accepted
10	I am curious and interested in all sort of things	44	185	93	71	2.51	1.08	Accepted
11	I have lots of "get up and go", I take on a lot of projects	17	216	110	50	2.51	1.11	Accepted
12	I feel like having fun, doing sports and participating in all my favourite activities and past times	39	136	139	79	2.34	1.33	Rejected
13	I smile easily	31	199	100	62	2.50	1.45	Accepted
14	I have a good sense of humour, easily making my friends laugh	59	100	110	124	2.24	1.35	Rejected
15	I am able to concentrate and listen to my friends	15	197	150	31	2.50	1.51	Accepted
16	I get along well with everyone around me	21	245	100	27	2.66	1.31	Accepted
17	I am able to face difficult situations in a positive way	45	134	190	24	2.51	1.16	Accepted
18	I am able to clearly sort things out when faced with complicated situations	52	194	130	17	2.72	1.16	Accepted
19	I am able to find answers to my problems without trouble	52	56	201	84	2.19	1.16	Rejected
20	I am quite calm	44	192	155	2	2.71	1.24	Accepted
21	I have the impression of really enjoying and living life to the fullest	35	190	90	78	2.46	1.33	Rejected
22	I feel good, at peace with myself	24	189	114	66	2.44	1.46	Rejected
23	I find life exciting, and I want to enjoy every moment of it	50	164	119	60	2.52	1.13	Accepted
24	My morale is good	130	191	51	21	3.09	1.15	Rejected
25	I feel healthy and in good shape	48	197	75	73	2.56	2.42	Accepted
26	My future looks better than my past	29	171	190	3	2.58	1.32	Accepted
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>Grand mean</b>				<b>2.53</b>		<b>Positive</b>

Table III. Psychological well-being of inmates N= 393

## Appendix D

		Attitude	Self-acceptance	Personal growth	Purpose in life	Environmental mastery	Autonomy	Positive relation with others
Pearson Correlation	Attitude	1.000	.065	.580	-.040	.531	.029	-.092
	Self-acceptance	.065	1.000	.124	.014	-.018	.009	.088
	Personal growth	.580	.124	1.000	-.050	-.064	-.034	.076
	Purpose in life	-.040	.014	-.050	1.000	-.050	-.068	-.035
	Environmental mastery	.531	-.018	-.064	-.050	1.000	.048	-.006
	Autonomy	.029	.009	-.034	-.068	.048	1.000	.061
	Positive relation with others	-.092	.088	.076	-.035	-.006	.061	1.000

**Table IV. Correlation of inmates' library attitude and the six constructs of psychological wellbeing**

## Appendix E

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	1514.522	6	252.420			
	Residual	36235.117	386	93.873	2.689	.014*	Significant
	Total	37749.639	392				

a. Predictors: (Constant), Positive relation with others, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, Self-acceptance, Autonomy, Personal growth

b. Dependent Variable: Attitude

**Table V. Relation between inmates' library attitude and their psychological wellbeing**

## Appendix E

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.650	.550	.540	3.68883

a. Predictors: (Constant), Positive relation with others, Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, Self-acceptance, Autonomy, Personal growth

**Table VI. Extent and type of relationship between inmates' library attitude and their psychological wellbeing**