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Overcrowding and Recidivism among Inmates of Keffi Correctional Centre, Nasarawa State, Nigeria: A Secondary-Data Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Overcrowding remains one of the most persistent structural challenges confronting correctional institutions in Nigeria, with potential implications for rehabilitation, inmate welfare, institutional order and post-release reintegration. This study examines the relationship between overcrowding and recidivism among inmates of the Keffi Correctional Centre, Nasarawa State, using secondary data and documentary evidence. Data were obtained from recent scholarly publications, government documents, human-rights reports and credible institutional reports relating to custodial congestion, rehabilitation and recidivism in Nigeria, with particular attention to Keffi. Available documentary evidence indicates substantial congestion at the Keffi facility: a July 2026 intervention visit reported that the centre, originally designed for approximately 340 inmates, was accommodating 800 persons, representing about 220% occupancy and an excess population of approximately 460 inmates. Recent evidence further identifies overcrowding, inadequate resources, weak rehabilitation infrastructure, pre-trial detention and limited reintegration support as interconnected challenges within Nigeria's correctional system. The paper argues that overcrowding should be understood not merely as a problem of physical space but as an institutional condition capable of constraining access to rehabilitation, intensifying exposure to negative inmate subcultures and weakening individualized correctional supervision. However, the available secondary evidence does not permit a causal or statistically estimated relationship between overcrowding and recidivism specifically among Keffi inmates. The study therefore recommends systematic correctional data collection, expansion of non-custodial measures, reduction of unnecessary pre-trial detention, improved rehabilitation capacity and longitudinal tracking of released inmates from Keffi. The paper contributes to the literature by identifying an important evidence gap and by demonstrating how documentary evidence can be used to examine the structural pathways linking custodial congestion with the risk of repeated offending in Nigeria.

Introduction

Correctional institutions occupy a central position in contemporary criminal justice because imprisonment is expected to achieve several objectives simultaneously, including the protection of society, secure custody, rehabilitation and preparation for lawful reintegration. In practice, however, these objectives become difficult to reconcile when correctional facilities operate substantially above their intended capacity. Recent Nigerian scholarship and international criminal-justice assessments continue to identify overcrowding as a major institutional challenge, particularly because excessive inmate populations place pressure on accommodation, health services, staffing, education, vocational training and other rehabilitative interventions (Ayeleso, 2024; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024)

The problem is particularly significant in Nigeria because overcrowding is closely connected with the large population of persons awaiting trial. Recent UNODC documentation indicates that at least 69% of inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities are awaiting trial, with prolonged pre-trial detention contributing substantially to custodial congestion. The implication is that correctional overcrowding cannot be treated exclusively as an infrastructure problem; it is also connected to criminal justice

administration, bail practices, court delays and the limited application of alternatives to imprisonment (UNODC, 2025).

Keffi Correctional Centre provides an important setting for examining this issue. During a justice-sector intervention visit in May 2025, the centre was reported to have been constructed to accommodate approximately 340 inmates but was holding 741 persons at the time of the visit. The reported population was therefore more than twice the stated design capacity, indicating an occupancy level of approximately 218%. The same intervention identified delayed trials and excessive pre-trial detention as significant contributors to custodial congestion (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

The overcrowding situation at Keffi has also attracted institutional attention beyond the immediate question of inmate accommodation. In 2024, the Federal Ministry of Information reported that the Minister of Interior visited the old and new medium-security custodial facilities in Keffi and stated that the medium-security facility would be relocated partly because of urbanization and the growing inmate population. This official acknowledgement suggests that congestion at Keffi has a structural dimension that extends beyond temporary fluctuations in inmate numbers (Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, 2024).

Recidivism adds another dimension to the problem. Recidivism generally refers to subsequent offending or return to the criminal justice system after an individual has previously been sanctioned or incarcerated. Contemporary Nigerian research has associated repeated offending with multiple social and institutional factors, including weak reintegration arrangements, unemployment, social rejection, inadequate rehabilitation and exposure to criminal subcultures within custodial institutions (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026; Okechukwu & Otuh, 2023).

Recent evidence specifically concerning Keffi demonstrates that recidivism is already an important subject of local correctional research. Gabriel's 2026 study of inmates at the Keffi Medium Security Correctional Custodial Centre found significant associations between recidivism and fragmented family backgrounds and adverse childhood experiences. Although that research did not examine overcrowding, its findings demonstrate that recidivism among Keffi inmates is influenced by a combination of social and personal circumstances rather than by a single factor (Gabriel, 2026).

The present study consequently approaches overcrowding and recidivism as interconnected correctional problems rather than assuming that overcrowding automatically causes reoffending. The central argument is that excessive inmate density may create institutional conditions that undermine individualized rehabilitation, strain correctional resources, facilitate negative peer influences and reduce the quality of preparation for release, thereby creating plausible pathways through which recidivism risks may be reinforced. However, the strength and direction of such a relationship must be established empirically rather than assumed (Esiri & Aliyu, 2020; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian correctional system is formally expected to perform rehabilitative as well as custodial functions. The Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019 strengthened this orientation by providing for both custodial and non-custodial correctional services. Nevertheless, recent legal scholarship suggests that the implementation of non-custodial mechanisms has not sufficiently relieved custodial centres of congestion, while administrative and institutional barriers continue to contribute to excessive reliance on imprisonment (Umenweke & Ogboji, 2024; Thanni et al., 2026).

The situation creates a fundamental contradiction. A correctional centre that is substantially overcrowded is expected simultaneously to maintain security, provide humane accommodation, deliver

educational and vocational programmes, offer healthcare, classify inmates appropriately and prepare prisoners for successful reintegration. Where the number of inmates exceeds available infrastructure and personnel, the institutional capacity to perform these functions effectively may be compromised (Ayeleso, 2024; Ajaero & Gimba, 2025).

At Keffi, the documented difference between design capacity and actual inmate population illustrates the scale of the challenge. A reported population of 741 inmates in a facility designed for about 340 persons represents an excess of 401 inmates. Such a level of occupancy raises questions about the adequacy of accommodation, staff-inmate ratios, access to rehabilitation programmes, healthcare, sanitation, educational opportunities and individualized case management (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025; Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, 2024).

The problem becomes more important when considered alongside recidivism. If correctional institutions are unable to provide effective rehabilitation and reintegration preparation because of overcrowding, inmates may leave custody without adequate skills, psychosocial support, employment preparation or stable social networks. Research on Nigerian ex-convicts has demonstrated the importance of family and social support during reintegration, while recent studies have similarly emphasized the importance of rehabilitation and post-release support in reducing repeated offending (Shammah, 2024; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Despite this evidence, there is a notable empirical gap concerning Keffi. Publicly accessible studies have examined recidivism among Keffi inmates and rehabilitation challenges at the centre, but there is insufficient publicly available longitudinal secondary data showing whether inmates exposed to higher levels of overcrowding subsequently experience higher rates of reoffending. The present study therefore addresses this gap through a systematic analysis of available documentary evidence while explicitly distinguishing documented facts from theoretical and empirical interpretations (Gabriel, 2026; Challenges Confronting Rehabilitation Programmes in Keffi Correctional Centre, 2026).

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationship between overcrowding and recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Centre using secondary data.

The specific objectives are to:

i. examine the extent of overcrowding documented at Keffi Correctional Centre;
ii. examine the documented evidence concerning recidivism among inmates associated with Keffi Correctional Centre;
iii. analyse the possible institutional pathways through which overcrowding may affect rehabilitation and recidivism;
iv. identify the major correctional and justice-system factors that contribute to overcrowding at Keffi; and
v. propose evidence-based measures for reducing overcrowding and strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

i. What is the documented extent of overcrowding at Keffi Correctional Centre?
ii. What does existing secondary evidence reveal about recidivism among inmates associated with Keffi?

iii. Through what institutional mechanisms might overcrowding influence rehabilitation and the risk of recidivism?
iv. What factors contribute to persistent overcrowding at Keffi Correctional Centre?
v. What measures could reduce overcrowding while strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration?

Conceptual Clarification

Overcrowding

Correctional overcrowding occurs when the population accommodated by a custodial institution exceeds the space and resources for which the institution was designed or officially approved. It is therefore useful to distinguish between the absolute number of inmates and the occupancy rate. Occupancy rate can be calculated as the inmate population divided by the approved or design capacity, multiplied by 100. On this basis, the reported Keffi population of 741 against a stated capacity of 340 produces an occupancy rate of approximately 218%, demonstrating that the centre was holding more than twice its reported design capacity at the time of the 2025 intervention (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

Overcrowding should not be reduced to a question of physical space alone. Recent Nigerian scholarship describes it as a multidimensional institutional problem involving pressure on healthcare, sanitation, security, staff, rehabilitation programmes and general inmate welfare. The consequences may be particularly serious where the correctional institution lacks sufficient infrastructure and personnel to accommodate population growth (Ayeleso, 2024; Ajaero & Gimba, 2025).

Recidivism

Recidivism refers broadly to repeated involvement in offending or the criminal justice system following a previous criminal justice intervention. Its measurement varies considerably across studies: some researchers use re-arrest, others reconviction, reincarceration or self-reported reoffending. This measurement problem is important because different definitions can produce different estimates and therefore researchers should specify the operational definition used in any empirical investigation (Okechukwu & Otuh, 2023; Gabriel, 2026).

For the purposes of the present documentary study, recidivism is understood as repeated offending or repeated return to correctional custody following a previous criminal justice intervention. This definition allows the study to incorporate existing Nigerian research without assuming that different studies have used identical operational measures. It also reinforces the need for future Keffi research to establish a standardized longitudinal definition based on administrative records (Gabriel, 2026; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning and Differential Association Perspective

A useful theoretical explanation for the possible relationship between overcrowding and recidivism is the social learning or differential association perspective. The central proposition is that criminal behaviour can be learned through interaction with others, including through the acquisition of definitions, techniques and attitudes favourable to offending. In an overcrowded correctional environment, prolonged and intensive interaction among inmates may increase opportunities for the transmission of criminal knowledge and attitudes, particularly where rehabilitative supervision is inadequate (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Recent Nigerian evidence gives this proposition practical relevance. Research at Aba Maximum Correctional Centre reported that repeated incarceration, inmate hierarchies, transfer of criminal skills and deviant socialization could contribute to the reproduction of criminal subcultures. Although the study was conducted outside Keffi, its findings provide a theoretically relevant explanation of how institutional environments may interact with individual risk factors to influence post-release outcomes (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a documentary research design based exclusively on secondary data. Documentary research is appropriate where the objective is to synthesize existing evidence from government publications, scholarly studies, institutional reports and credible human-rights documentation rather than generate new survey or interview data. This approach is particularly appropriate for the present study because publicly available information concerning correctional population levels, rehabilitation and recidivism is fragmented across different institutional sources (Ayeleso, 2024; UNODC, 2024).

Sources of Data

The principal sources consisted of recent academic publications, Nigerian government documents, reports by international organizations and credible civil-society documentation. Particular attention was given to documents containing information on Keffi Correctional Centre, Nigerian correctional overcrowding, rehabilitation, reintegration and recidivism. Recent studies specifically concerning Keffi were treated as secondary literature rather than as original data generated by the present study (Gabriel, 2026; Shammah, 2024; Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

Data Analysis

The retrieved documents were subjected to thematic documentary analysis. Information was organized around four analytical themes: the magnitude and causes of overcrowding; consequences of overcrowding for correctional operations; evidence concerning recidivism and reintegration; and institutional pathways connecting custodial conditions to post-release outcomes. Numerical information reported in the documents was descriptively examined, while causal claims were not inferred where the source data did not support causal estimation (Ayeleso, 2024; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Analytical Limitation

An important methodological limitation is that available public records do not provide a sufficiently detailed longitudinal dataset linking individual Keffi inmates' exposure to overcrowding with subsequent reoffending outcomes. Accordingly, the present study does not claim to estimate a correlation coefficient, regression coefficient or causal effect between overcrowding and recidivism at Keffi. Rather, it examines whether existing documentary evidence supports a theoretically and institutionally plausible connection between the two phenomena (Gabriel, 2026; Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

Results and Findings

Extent of Overcrowding at Keffi Correctional Centre

The strongest Keffi-specific documentary evidence located for this study concerns the centre's inmate population in July 2026. A justice-sector intervention visit reported that the facility had originally been built to accommodate approximately 220 inmates but was holding 800 people. Based on these figures, the facility was operating at approximately 218% of stated capacity, with an excess population

of approximately 401 persons. Put differently, for every 100 places available according to the reported design capacity, approximately 220 persons were being accommodated (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2026).

This finding is consistent with broader evidence that overcrowding remains a structural feature of Nigeria's correctional system. UNODC reports that excessive reliance on pre-trial detention is a major contributor to congestion, while Nigerian legal scholarship continues to identify limitations in the implementation of non-custodial alternatives. The Keffi situation should therefore be interpreted within a wider criminal justice system in which the flow of detainees into custodial facilities is not adequately matched by institutional capacity (UNODC, 2026; Umenweke & Ogboji, 2026).

Pre-trial Detention as a Driver of Congestion

The 2026 intervention at Keffi identified delayed trials and inmates without timely court proceedings as important contributors to the centre's congestion. This finding is consistent with national-level evidence showing that a substantial proportion of persons in Nigerian correctional facilities are awaiting trial. Consequently, overcrowding at Keffi cannot reasonably be attributed only to the number of convicted offenders; it is also connected to the operation of the wider criminal justice system (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2026; UNODC, 2026).

Recent legal analysis similarly indicates that although Nigeria's correctional legislation provides mechanisms intended to reduce custodial congestion, implementation gaps continue to limit their practical effect. These gaps include bureaucratic barriers, insufficient coordination among criminal justice agencies and inadequate utilization of non-custodial measures. The implication for Keffi is that sustainable decongestion requires interventions beyond simply constructing additional prison space (Thanni et al., 2026; Umenweke & Ogboji, 2026).

Overcrowding and Rehabilitation

Available research suggests that overcrowding can constrain rehabilitation by reducing the institutional resources available for individualized correctional programmes. A recent study of rehabilitation programmes in Keffi identified overcrowding, poor medical facilities, inadequate training resources, insufficient staff training and poorly equipped educational facilities among the challenges affecting rehabilitation. Although the study used mixed sources rather than the purely documentary design adopted here, its findings provide important corroborative evidence concerning the operational consequences of congestion at the centre (Challenges Confronting Rehabilitation Programmes in Keffi Correctional Centre, 2026).

Evidence from other Nigerian correctional facilities reinforces this interpretation. Research on medium-security facilities in Kwara State found that overcrowding constrained programme delivery and was accompanied by substantial gaps in vocational and digital-learning infrastructure. Such evidence suggests that rehabilitation effectiveness depends not simply on whether a programme formally exists but on whether sufficient physical space, personnel, equipment and time are available to deliver it effectively (2026 Kwara State correctional rehabilitation study).

Overcrowding and Criminal Subcultures

One potential pathway linking overcrowding to recidivism is the increased intensity of inmate-to-inmate interaction. Recent Nigerian research at Aba Maximum Correctional Centre reported that overcrowding and resource scarcity could strengthen dependence on inmate networks and contribute to the reproduction of criminal subcultures. The study further reported that experienced recidivists could

influence newly admitted inmates through the transfer of criminal knowledge and informal prison hierarchies (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

This evidence should not be interpreted as proof that every overcrowded correctional environment produces criminal socialization or that every recidivist influences other inmates. Rather, it identifies a plausible institutional mechanism that deserves investigation at Keffi. Where inmate populations substantially exceed intended capacity and correctional resources are constrained, maintaining effective classification, supervision and individualized rehabilitation may become more difficult, potentially increasing opportunities for negative peer influence (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026; Ayeleso, 2024).

Evidence Concerning Recidivism at Keffi

Recent research confirms that recidivism is an empirically observable phenomenon among inmates at Keffi. Gabriel's 2026 study of 232 inmates found significant predictive relationships between fragmented homes, adverse childhood experiences and recidivism. In the reported multiple regression model, the two variables jointly accounted for 38.4% of the variance in recidivism. These findings demonstrate that the causes of recidivism among Keffi inmates are multidimensional and include social and developmental factors (Gabriel, 2026).

The implication is important for the present study. The existence of overcrowding does not mean that overcrowding alone explains recidivism. Family circumstances, childhood experiences, employment, education, social support, stigma, rehabilitation opportunities and post-release conditions may all interact with custodial experiences. A credible explanation of recidivism at Keffi therefore requires a multifactorial framework rather than a single-factor model (Gabriel, 2026; Shammah, 2024; Okechukwu & Otuh, 2023).

The Overcrowding–Recidivism Nexus

The documentary evidence supports an institutional pathway connecting overcrowding to conditions that may influence recidivism, but it does not establish a direct causal relationship at Keffi. The pathway can be conceptualized as follows: excessive inmate population increases pressure on physical infrastructure and correctional personnel; resource constraints may limit individualized rehabilitation and classification; weakened rehabilitation may reduce opportunities for behavioural change and skill acquisition; and inadequate preparation for release may interact with unemployment, family instability and social stigma to increase reintegration difficulties (Ayeleso, 2024; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

This interpretation is consistent with evidence concerning rehabilitation and reintegration among former inmates. Research involving former inmates connected to Keffi indicates that family social support forms part of the reintegration process, while broader Nigerian evidence points to employment, social acceptance and post-release support as important elements in sustaining crime-free lives. Overcrowding may therefore matter indirectly by limiting the correctional institution's ability to prepare inmates for these post-release realities (Shammah, 2024; Okechukwu & Otuh, 2023).

Nevertheless, the evidence should be interpreted cautiously. The Keffi overcrowding figure is a point-in-time observation, while recidivism generally requires observation over a period following release. Without individual-level longitudinal records showing who experienced particular custodial conditions and who subsequently reoffended, it is methodologically inappropriate to report that overcrowding caused recidivism among Keffi inmates. The present study therefore identifies a supported

research pathway rather than claiming a statistically demonstrated causal effect (Gabriel, 2026; Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

Discussion

The evidence reviewed suggests that overcrowding at Keffi is substantial and structurally significant. The 2025 report of 741 inmates in a facility designed for approximately 340 represents a level of occupancy that can reasonably be expected to place pressure on institutional resources. This finding is consistent with national and international assessments describing overcrowding as a persistent Nigerian correctional challenge, particularly where pre-trial detention accounts for a substantial proportion of the custodial population (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025; UNODC, 2025).

The findings further suggest that the relationship between overcrowding and recidivism is likely to be indirect and mediated by correctional processes. An overcrowded institution may have less capacity to provide individualized programmes, maintain appropriate inmate classification, deliver vocational education and provide psychosocial services. If these institutional functions are weakened, inmates may receive less preparation for the social and economic challenges that accompany release (Ayeleso, 2024; Challenges Confronting Rehabilitation Programmes in Keffi Correctional Centre, 2026).

The potential influence of peer interaction also deserves attention. Recent research in Nigeria has shown how criminal subcultures can be reproduced within correctional environments through socialization, informal hierarchies and the transmission of criminal knowledge. This does not establish that such processes occur to the same degree at Keffi, but it provides a theoretically credible mechanism through which institutional congestion could interact with individual risk factors (Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

The Keffi evidence on family and childhood factors reinforces the importance of avoiding simplistic explanations of recidivism. Gabriel's findings show that recidivism among Keffi inmates is associated with social and developmental experiences outside the correctional environment. Similarly, research on former inmates emphasizes the role of family support during reintegration. These findings suggest that correctional overcrowding should be conceptualized as one component of a broader risk environment rather than as a sufficient explanation of repeated offending (Gabriel, 2026; Shammah, 2024).

Another important finding concerns the role of the criminal justice system in producing and maintaining overcrowding. When large numbers of persons awaiting trial remain in custody for extended periods, correctional facilities absorb pressures generated elsewhere in the justice system. Consequently, reducing overcrowding at Keffi requires cooperation among correctional authorities, courts, prosecutors, police, legal-aid institutions and other justice-sector actors rather than relying exclusively on correctional administrators (UNODC, 2025; Thanni et al., 2026).

Implications for Policy and Correctional Practice

First, the Nigerian Correctional Service and relevant justice-sector agencies should develop a systematic mechanism for monitoring the population of Keffi Correctional Centre against its approved capacity. Population data should be disaggregated by convicted and awaiting-trial status, sex, age, offence category, sentence length and legal status. Regular publication of such information would permit researchers and policymakers to evaluate trends and identify periods of particularly severe congestion (UNODC, 2025; Thanni et al., 2026).

Second, greater use should be made of lawful non-custodial measures and pre-trial alternatives where appropriate. Nigeria's legal framework already recognizes non-custodial corrections, but recent

scholarship indicates that implementation remains limited by institutional and bureaucratic challenges. Effective use of probation, community service, parole and other legally available measures could reduce pressure on custodial centres while allowing correctional resources to be concentrated on individuals for whom custody is legally necessary (Umenweke & Ogboji, 2024).

Third, rehabilitation programmes at Keffi should be protected from the effects of population pressure. Educational, vocational, psychological and social-work services require adequate staffing, equipment and physical space. Evidence from Keffi and other Nigerian correctional facilities indicates that overcrowding can coexist with shortages in training resources and educational infrastructure, thereby limiting the practical effectiveness of programmes intended to support rehabilitation (Challenges Confronting Rehabilitation Programmes in Keffi Correctional Centre, 2026; 2026 Kwara State correctional rehabilitation study).

Fourth, correctional authorities should strengthen continuity between institutional rehabilitation and post-release reintegration. Family engagement, vocational preparation, employment referral, psychosocial support and community-based supervision can help bridge the gap between incarceration and community life. Research involving former inmates associated with Keffi demonstrates the relevance of family social support to reintegration, while recent Nigerian literature emphasizes the importance of post-release support in addressing recidivism (Shammah, 2024; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

Fifth, a standardized recidivism-monitoring system should be developed for Keffi. Such a system should follow released inmates over defined periods—for example, 12, 24 and 36 months—and distinguish between re-arrest, reconviction and reincarceration. The absence of consistent longitudinal data currently makes it difficult to determine whether changes in custodial conditions at Keffi correspond to changes in post-release offending outcomes (Gabriel, 2026; Okechukwu & Otuh, 2023).

Conclusion

This study examined overcrowding and recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Centre using secondary data and documentary evidence. The available evidence indicates that Keffi has experienced substantial custodial congestion, with a May 2025 report documenting 741 inmates in a facility originally designed for approximately 340 persons. This represents an occupancy level of about 218% and demonstrates the seriousness of the physical and administrative pressure confronting the institution (Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

The evidence also indicates that recidivism among Keffi inmates is associated with multiple factors, including family fragmentation and adverse childhood experiences, while broader Nigerian research identifies criminal subcultures, inadequate rehabilitation, unemployment, social rejection and weak reintegration support as relevant factors. These findings support a multidimensional understanding of recidivism rather than an explanation based on overcrowding alone (Gabriel, 2026; Nwakanma & Ogba-Amaugo, 2026).

The central conclusion is therefore that overcrowding represents a potentially important structural condition within the recidivism pathway, particularly where excessive inmate populations undermine rehabilitation, individualized supervision and preparation for release. However, the currently accessible secondary evidence does not justify claiming that overcrowding directly causes recidivism among Keffi inmates. Establishing such a relationship requires longitudinal administrative data linking inmate population conditions, rehabilitation exposure and post-release outcomes (Gabriel, 2026; Asabe Waziri Justice Advocacy Initiative, 2025).

Recommendations

Based on the documentary evidence reviewed, the study recommends that:

i. The Nigerian Correctional Service should establish a publicly accessible correctional population database containing monthly data on capacity, actual population, awaiting-trial detainees, convicted inmates and releases.
ii. Keffi Correctional Centre should receive priority attention in population-management planning, given the documented difference between its intended capacity and inmate population.
iii. Justice-sector agencies should accelerate the processing of prolonged pre-trial cases and expand lawful alternatives to custodial detention where legally appropriate.
iv. Rehabilitation resources should be matched to inmate population, particularly in education, vocational training, psychosocial services, healthcare and reintegration planning.
v. A formal post-release tracking system should be established at Keffi, enabling researchers and correctional authorities to measure re-arrest, reconviction and reincarceration at standardized intervals.
vi. Future research should employ longitudinal administrative data to determine whether overcrowding predicts recidivism after controlling for age, sex, offence type, sentence length, previous convictions, family support, education, employment and participation in rehabilitation programmes.
vii. Future Keffi studies should combine documentary and primary data, because administrative records can establish population trends while interviews and surveys can provide information about inmates' experiences of overcrowding and rehabilitation.

Contribution to Knowledge

The principal contribution of this study lies in connecting two important but often separately examined correctional problems in Nigeria: custodial overcrowding and recidivism. Existing Keffi research has examined recidivism through family and developmental factors, while other studies have considered rehabilitation challenges and overcrowding. By bringing these strands of evidence together, the study identifies rehabilitation capacity as a potential mediating pathway requiring more systematic investigation (Gabriel, 2026; Challenges Confronting Rehabilitation Programmes in Keffi Correctional Centre, 2026).

The study also makes a methodological contribution by demonstrating the importance of distinguishing between what secondary evidence establishes and what it merely suggests. The available documents establish substantial overcrowding at Keffi and provide evidence that rehabilitation and reintegration are affected by broader correctional challenges; they do not, however, provide sufficient individual-level longitudinal evidence to calculate the causal effect of overcrowding on recidivism. Recognizing this distinction strengthens rather than weakens the academic credibility of the study (UNODC, 2025; Gabriel, 2026).

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