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## Graying Incarcerated Persons and Education Programs in Nigerian Correctional Centre

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**Abstract:** *Correctional education programs are rehabilitation programs designed for incarcerated persons in Nigerian correctional institutions. However, getting the graying incarcerated persons to participate in education programs becomes quite challenging. This study investigates graying incarcerated persons and education programs in one correctional centre. Data were collected qualitatively from fifteen (15) incarcerated individuals aged 60 years and above using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed in analyzing the data generated for the study. Findings show that there are no available education programs for graying incarcerated individuals. The study also revealed that designing education programs in such a way that it will accommodate the needs of the graying population will alleviate or soothe this category of prisoners. The study, therefore, recommends that education programs should be inclusive of different populations of incarcerated persons, especially the graying ones. Social workers have roles to play in alleviating the problems faced by graying incarcerated persons.*

**Keywords:** *Correctional centre, education programs, graying incarcerated persons, prisoners, rehabilitation programs*

### Introduction

From cradle to the grave, education has been viewed as a lifetime endeavor. Regardless of one's age or stage in life, one must always learn to improve attitudes, knowledge, and habits in order to play a part in society effectively, enjoy life, and realize aspirations (Imhabekhai, 2011). Education that takes place in correctional institutions is known as correctional education or prison education. Several scholars have described prison education (or correctional education) as the education intended for incarcerated persons to provide them with real skills and information to enable them to be productive upon release (National Reentry Resource Centre [NRRC], 2014; Ogbaka, Ewelum & Apiti, 2017; Council of Europe Development Bank [CEDB], 1989). Carpentry, welding, adult literacy, tailoring, self-development (stress and anger management), violence (violence and aggressiveness management), addiction (substance abuse, drug and alcohol addiction), education, job skills, leisure, art, and spirituality are among the correctional education programs for those who are imprisoned (Uche



et al., 2015; Arbour et al., 2021; Matejkowski et al., 2014). One of the rehabilitative programs offered to prisoners while they are incarcerated is education. According to Hesselink (2018), prison education is a crucial instrument for the prisoner's self-improvement, reformation, and rehabilitation. Ahmed et al. (2019) noted that using the many educational programs accessible to incarcerated persons while detained constitutes being "prison educated." These initiatives aim to help incarcerated persons get back on their feet. To accomplish this goal, however, graying incarcerated persons may be hampered by their advanced age.

With the growing population of graying incarcerated persons globally, it is necessary to provide them with high-quality rehabilitation through educational programs. In 2013, 2.6% of incarcerated individuals in the United States of America (USA) were 60 years of age or older (US Department of Justice, 2016). Over 8,000 incarcerated persons in England and Wales are over 50, making up about 11% of the jail population (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). In the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, there are a lot of older incarcerated adults. According to Reimer (2008), USA and Canada are the countries with the highest rates of incarceration for older adults worldwide. In terms of the proportion of older adults housed in correctional centers, South Africa tops the continent of Africa, followed by Ethiopia (Coyle, 2021). Nevertheless, there are no such data about the ageing incarcerated persons in Nigerian prisons. These numbers are rising, highlighting the critical need for rehabilitation programs through correctional education that focuses on the psychological adjustment of senior prisoners (Langat et al., 2015). Older incarcerated persons' educational requirements are frequently disregarded because many of them don't offer evident behavioral concerns to the prison administration (Ginn & Robinson, 2012).

Amongst correctional officers and researchers, there has been a heated discussion about what constitutes the old (Aday, 1994). In the same vein, William et al. (2012) opined that there is disagreement among researchers and practitioners on the appropriate age to classify prisoners as older adults, geriatric, or older. In Canada, those who are 50 years or older are considered older adult prisoners. Older adult prisoners are those who are 55 years of age or older in the United States (US). Orimo et al. (2006) defines an older incarcerated adult as someone who is 65 years of age or older. Also, Aday (2006), categorized older adults into three: those who are behind bars above the age of 50, those who are behind bars under 50 but are serving a lengthy term, and those who are "career prisoners" who are repeatedly behind bars. The National Institute of Corrections and some states describe this category as being 50 years of age or older (Anno et al, 2004; Nowotny et al., 2016), however, other organizations use 55 or 65 as the cutoff for "older incarcerated persons" (Kim & Peterson, 2014). According to the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) (2011), a functional criterion for older incarcerated adults is 50 years of age or older. Grant (1999) and Hayes et al., (2012) posited that ageing is thought to begin at 50 in the prison population as opposed to 60 in the general population (Dawes, 2009; Fazel et al., 2001; Wangmo et al., 2017). However, for this study, incarcerated persons 60 years of age or older are considered graying or older adults.

Prison life may be difficult for everyone, but it can be especially difficult for those whose bodies and brains may be affected by changes associated with ageing and may depend more on others and may lose some or all of their autonomy due to ageing (Human Rights Watch, 2012). HelpAge International (2011) asserts that as we age, our rights do not alter. As a result, the rights of graying incarcerated persons regarding education remain the same. In addition, as people age, they encounter greater obstacles to involvement, depend more on others, and lose some or all of their autonomy. Older incarcerated persons experience isolation and prejudice because their unique medical, social, and educational requirements are not being served (Prison Reform Trust, 2011). The necessity for programs that are particularly developed for older incarcerated adults, such as music, board games, shuffleboard, horse-shoes, and movies, was emphasized by Snyder et al. (2009). As compared to their younger counterparts, these programs accommodate the slower pace and different physical capabilities of older adult prisoners. For this population, educational programs must cover topics like chronic sickness, loneliness, despair, and end-of-life concerns (Snyder, et al., 2009).

For older incarcerated adults, the Hocking Correctional Institution in Ohio has introduced educational programs (Snyder, et al., 2009). A jogger/walker exercise program, chair aerobics, adult basic education, job training, and General Education Development (GED) classes are among the services and programs offered. The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services took part in a two-day training program run by the Division of Geriatrics and Gerontology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and the Department of Gerontology at the University of Nebraska Omaha using Cianciolo and Zupan's (2004) training approach. This course was created to inform correctional professionals about the special possibilities and difficulties associated with the older adults' population as well as the most effective methods for rehabilitating graying incarcerated persons through education programs.

To reform prisoners while they are serving their sentences in jail, Nigerian correctional facilities have devised rehabilitation programs that have switched from interventions focused on punishment to treatments in the form of educational programs. Yet, a preliminary review of the literature reveals a dearth of information on education initiatives particularly designed for graying persons in Nigerian prisons. For correctional institutions, rehabilitating an old prisoner via education is a difficult task (Langat et al., 2015).

Training incarcerated persons from an ageing population is one of the difficulties of education in prisons (Hawley et al., 2013; Giles & Whale, 2013; Mutabari & Wanjohi, 2017; Iyida, 2018). According to Klein et al. (2004), younger respondents take part in prison education more than their older counterparts. There is a wealth of material on prisoner education now available (Farley et al., 2016; Mohammed & Mohamed, 2015; Otodo & Ugwuoke, 2015; Adeyeye, 2019). However, there is a paucity of literature on correctional education programs specifically designed for graying incarcerated individuals. To this end, it may be difficult for this category of incarcerated persons to participate in education programmes offered in correctional centres.

Costelloe (2003) discovered a connection between educational level and motivation to learn or participate in education programmes. Educationally underprivileged prisoners were driven more by attempts to escape prison routines than yearning for education itself. The more educated individuals, however, were proactive from the beginning and took advantage of the possibilities to advance their education while incarcerated. They viewed education as a tool for achieving certain objectives such as studying for the sake of learning, as well as a technique to manage prison life. In the same vein, Manger, Eikeland and Asbjørnsen (2013) in their study reported that incarcerated persons make decisions about their education depending on a variety of factors which can be both intrinsic and external. Incarcerated individuals may want to participate in education programs for the purpose of learning or may be motivated by factors unrelated to education itself, such as worries about the future (e.g. the need for a job or a wish to refrain from crime). They may also be driven by a desire to get away from something less appealing, such as the tedious routines of jail life, boredom, or a need to socialize with other students. The characteristics that can lead to participation in education and that can create a better platform for boosting learning must be understood by correctional education officials and instructors (Manger et al., 2013). However, in general, extrinsic variables that were connected to quality of life proved to be the main motivators. This study therefore, explores graying incarcerated persons and education programs in correctional centre, Abia State, Nigeria.

The older adult prisoners should not be forced into the existing educational programs; instead, new programs that are more specifically tailored to the needs and preferences of older adult incarcerated persons be created (Porporino, 2014). Separate basic education classes would make it possible to adjust the speed and delivery of the information in a way that would better serve older adult learners. This would also help them deal with the shame of falling behind their younger colleagues (Formby & Abel, 1997). In addition, experts like social workers may assist older adult incarcerated at various system levels and in a variety of positions. They must lobby for the creation and execution of legislative measures that will make it possible for them to provide the special education programs that members of this vulnerable group need to address their diverse requirements (Chadha, 2013). Correctional facilities must create and

implement the adjustments and educational programs required for ageing prisoners due to the rise of older persons in prison and the early ageing that happens with prisoners (Wolfe, 2018).

Member (2021) noted that professional social workers are quite important in correctional institutions, despite the fact that incarcerated persons already have access to many other sorts of correctional services. They (social workers) offer supporting services inside the facility and links to community resources. Social work services may be used in the areas of mental health, substance addiction, education, and vocational rehabilitation within a correctional facility. The profession of social work is dedicated to advancing human rights and reaching higher levels of social justice (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2016). There are several functions that social work as a helping profession may perform. It promotes improved laws for those who are jailed (Uche et al., 2023).

## **Methodology**

### ***Study setting***

The current study was done at an anonymous custodial center in Nigeria. The center was primarily chosen because it is a maximum security prison that shelters both male and female incarcerated individuals. Also, the center was purposefully considered because it has different education programs for prisoners and equally has a high number of older incarcerated individuals (27). During the study period, there were 1,099 incarcerated persons, 1,074 were males, and 25 were females. Therefore, around 97.7% of all the incarcerated persons in this custodial center were males. Convicted persons from this population were 153; 151 were males, while only 2 were females. The delay in administration of criminal justice system in Nigeria (Agbonika, 2014) to a large extent contributed to the fewer number of this category of incarcerated persons. In some cases, it takes about five years for Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) to present case files of incarcerated persons to the appropriate authority. The convicted persons represent 13.9% of the entire incarcerated population in the center, while the older adult prisoners' population constitutes 17.6% of the convicted persons. The remaining 946 incarcerated individuals were awaiting trial. This category of incarcerated persons was excluded from the study as they do not engage in correctional rehabilitation programs in Nigeria.

### ***Study participants***

A phenomenological approach was adopted as graying incarcerated persons who participated in the study were given the opportunity to share their experiences with and opinions on correctional education programs. The strategy allowed the researchers to write about their findings from the viewpoints of people who had firsthand experience (Flick, 2002). The study participants were limited to convicted males aged 60 years and above who have been incarcerated for at least five years. Only male incarcerated persons were considered because there were only two convicted females in the center at the time of the study. Moreover, the female prisoners did not meet the age criterion. The convicted incarcerated persons were purposively considered because the Nigerian prison education program is meant for this category of prisoners alone (Uche, et al., 2023). Furthermore, those who enrolled in education programs and were willing to participate were also considered in the study. A sampling technique was used to ensure the selection of specific persons who fit into the scope of the study and were willing to provide the needed information (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Silverman, 2018). Study participants were identified through the officer in charge of the center and the officers in charge of the education programs in the study area. The interviews took place in the prison workshop. Participants were brought in one after another by one of the officials to the researchers that conducted the interview. The recruiting process has the challenge of selecting all the 27 convicted incarcerated individuals that met the inclusion criteria. Twelve (12) incarcerated persons who were within the inclusion criteria were not healthy enough to participate in the study. To this end, the number of participants sampled was no longer all the 27 convicted incarcerated individuals as proposed but 15 participants that were in good health and equally met the inclusion criteria. In total, 15 convicted male incarcerated persons of 60 years and above were interviewed.

### ***Study procedure***

This investigation was qualitative. This strategy was used to better understand the participants' experiences with programs for correctional education (Lindbom, Larsson & Agard, 2017). Open-ended questions were used in 15 in-depth interviews. Participants were free to express themselves and go into further detail with their responses. The prison workshop is where the interviews were conducted. The second author described the aim of the interview before it began, that participation was completely optional, that their information would be kept private, and that they may end the conversation or decline to answer any questions at any moment. Furthermore, permission to record the interview was also sought from the participants. The participants signed the consent form before the interview started. A thematic interview guide was used, which included questions that addressed the education programs available for the graying incarcerated individuals, participation of graying incarcerated individuals in already existing education programs, challenges of participating in education programs with the younger incarcerated individuals and measures to enhance education programs for graying incarcerated persons. The interviews took approximately forty-five minutes to one hour.

### ***Data analysis***

The interviews were conducted in the Igbo language, recorded, and then translated verbatim into English by the authors. One of the authors served as a note-taker. The transcribed data were analyzed thematically, to discover, interpret and translate meanings and patterns (Ritchie et al., 2018). The selection of thematic analysis was based on its inherent flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process began by reading through the interview transcriptions and field notes to become familiarized with the data. The manifest and latent content analysis by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) enabled our data evaluation as both the verbal and non-verbal clues as well as the deeper meanings of participant's information were also considered. A collective analysis was later completed, making sure quotes and themes were correctly matched. The interview was used as instrument for data collection. We read through the transcripts of the interviews several times to get a feel for the information. This was achieved by engaging in repeated line to line reading of separate transcripts first, then single-text transcripts. The identified meaning units were then condensed into smaller meaning units and coded. Codes with comparable contents were then combined into categories to describe the manifest content. We then evaluated the categories and offered their opinions. This process made it possible to compare the similarities and differences across the categories and made it easier to identify the themes, or underlying content, of the text. The writers agreed with and recognized four underlying themes. We reviewed the interview transcripts, field notes, and data fragments to assess the original quotes in their contexts, to measure for robustness. Following Bryman's (2016) suggestion, we scrutinized relationships between the codes and research questions and assigned labels adequately representing the codes. We gave labels (numbers) to participants reflecting their pseudonyms to serve as means of identification and ensure anonymity (Willis et al., 2016). For example, the first person interviewed is pseudonymized as 'Participant 1'. After the rigors were followed, the data were classified into four major themes and seven sub-themes as shown in Table 1. These themes and sub themes emerged from the analysis but were guided by the research questions.

### ***Ethical consideration***

The study was approved by the Strategic Contacts, Ethics and Publications (STRACEP) unit of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (ref no. UNNEC/05/0021/10-ST03/0024).

**Table 1:** Themes and sub-themes

<b>1.</b>	<b>Education programs available for the graying incarcerated individuals</b>
	i. No education for the older incarcerated
<b>2.</b>	<b>Participation of graying incarcerated persons in already existing education programs</b>
	i. Age as a barrier to participation ii. Benefits of participating in education programs iii Forsaken
<b>3.</b>	<b>Challenges of participating in education programs with the younger incarcerated individuals</b>
	i. Bullying and insults ii Physical assault
<b>4.</b>	<b>Measures to enhance education programs for graying incarcerated persons</b>
	i. General well-being

## Results

Four major themes and seven sub-themes emerged from analysis of the interviews. The first theme presented the education programs available for graying incarcerated individuals where ‘no education for the older incarcerated emerged. The second theme looked at the participation of graying incarcerated persons in already existing education programs; ‘age as a barrier to participation’, ‘benefits of participating in education programs’, and ‘forsaken’ emerged. The third theme showed the challenges of participating in education programs with the younger incarcerated individuals; ‘bullying and insults’, and ‘physical assault’ emerged. Finally, the fourth theme looked at measures to enhance education programs for graying incarcerated persons and ‘general well-being’ emerged. Table 1 highlights the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from data analysis. In view of the small number of participants, the correctional centre and the Nigerian State in which it resides have not been disclosed to ensure anonymity (Willis et al., 2016).

## Participants’ demographics

The 15 graying incarcerated individuals selected to participate in the study were between the ages of 60 and 70 years, with a mean age of 65.1 years. Four of the participants were widowed, eight were currently married, and three were divorced. Also, before conviction, six of the participants were artisans, two were civil servants, and four were farmers, while the remaining three were retirees. Additionally, seven of the participants had secondary education before conviction, only three had University degrees, and the remaining five had primary education. Furthermore, none of the participants has his present educational status changed from what it was. Except for one participant that was a Muslim, and another one an African traditional religious worshipper (ATR), all participants were Christians. Finally, all the participants have been in the custodial center for more than five years (See Table 2).



**Table 2:** Socio-demographic features of participants

Participants	Age (in years)	Current marital status	Occupation before conviction	Educational qualification before conviction	Religious affiliation	Duration in custodial centre (in years and months)
1	66	Married	Artisan	SSSC	Christian	6.3
2	60	Married	Artisan	SSSC	Christian	5.5
3	62	Divorced	Civil servant	M.Sc	Christian	6.2
4	65	Married	Retiree	SSSC	Christian	6.0
5	67	Widowed	Farmer	FSLC	Christian	5.8
6	70	Married	Artisan	FSLC	ATR	5.7
7	68	Married	Artisan	FSLC	Christian	6.9
8	70	Widowed	Retiree	<u>B.Sc</u>	Christian	6.6
9	61	Widowed	Artisan	FSLC	Christian	5.9
10	64	Divorced	Farmer	SSSC	Christian	6.6
11	66	Married	Farmer	SSSC	Christian	5.5
12	69	Married	Retiree	SSSC	Muslim	6.5
13	65	Widowed	Farmer	SSSC	Christian	5.6
14	60	Married	Civil servant	M.Ed	Christian	5.8
15	63	Divorced	Artisan	FSLC	Christian	5.1

**Attention:** SSSCE = Senior Secondary School Certificate (certificate issued after completing 6 years of secondary school); M.Sc = Master of Science degree, M.Ed = Master of Education degree; B. Sc = Bachelor of Science degree; FSLC = First School Leaving Certificate (certificate issued after completing 6 years of primary education).

### Theme 1: Education programs available for the graying incarcerated individuals

Participants reflected upon the types of education programs available for incarcerated persons. Surprisingly, it was revealed that there was no specific education programs designed for the graying incarcerated individuals.

#### *No education for the older incarcerated*

Participants lamented that there was no age inclusiveness in how Nigerian prison education was designed. Hear them: "...there is no education programme for old ones like me in this prison" (Participant 10). "Such programme does not exist here unless in the Western world" (Participant 3). "(smiles), to the best of my knowledge, no education is made available for us to keep body and soul together" (Participant 1). However, two of the participants noted that some correctional education programs, such as craft making, tailoring and adult education, are for every incarcerated person irrespective of age and can benefit the older incarcerated adults if they are physically able enough. "Craft making and adult education are part of education programs meant for every prisoner. It is available for all and some of us who are not so weak do engage in them" (Participant 4). "There has never been any education program specially designed for older adult prisoners as far as Nigerian prisons are concerned. Yes, there are different education programs available for convicted persons in this center but one will not say that the programs are for the older incarcerated adult ones. Adult education and tailoring can serve the needs of older adult prisoners" (Participant 2).

### Theme 2: Participation of graying incarcerated individuals in already existing education programs

The researchers, having been informed about the non-existence of education programs for the graying incarcerated individuals sought to know if they are involved in already existing education programs. Participants admitted that there are benefits in participating in education programs. However, old age related issues were seen as intrinsic barriers to their involvement.

### ***Age as a barrier to participation***

All the participants except three attested that they were not involved in any education program. They explained that age has affected their strength and health and so could not allow them to participate in education programs as much as they desired to do so. However, they see participation in education programs as something that would sharpen their minds and make their brains active, which would also help them think less about being in prison.

“My son, I would have loved to participate in at least one of the programs but of what purpose, since I can hardly sit for one hour” (Participant 5).

“I am not interested in any and don’t have the intention of doing so. I feel that age is not on my side for that, so my body does not need such stress now” (Participant 2).

“I cannot actively be involved in any work going on in the workshop and I don’t need these younger prisoners to insult me. The best option is to stay on my own” (Participant 13).

“My eyes are failing me and I cannot do much with them not to talk of stressing them further” (Participant 3).

“I noticed of late that my memory is failing me. How can I participate in any of these education programs when I find it difficult remembering things?” (Participant 8)

“Noooo! What for? Not anymore. I am far gone in age. I am not involved in any because I don’t want to die before my time. The clock is ticking fast so let me relax my nerves even though this place is not a desired place to be” (Participant 15).

“I would have been involved in the program if I were 15 years younger but I can’t because of my health. The program would have helped me in thinking less about the problems of this world. My brain would have been active once again. I will participate in my next life (laughs)” (Participant 11).

“I have no reason to participate in an education program because it is of no benefit to me now. It is good for the young and healthy. The younger ones have hope of using the acquired skills and knowledge outside here when they leave the prison. If I eventually leaves here alive, I will be grateful to God. So, there is no need to bother myself over nothing” (Participant 12).

### ***Benefits of participating in education programs***

Three of the participants confirmed that they participate in education programs. The benefits mentioned include engaging in adult basic education, learning of tailoring and craft making skills. Hear them: “I have been a tailor before my incarceration, so I did not find it difficult engaging in tailoring. This has also enhanced my skill in tailoring (Participant 6). “I am engaged in craft work like basket weaving” (Participant 2). “The type of education program I am involved in is adult basic education. In this class, we are taught how to read and write English alphabets” (Participant 4).

### ***Forsaken***

During interviews, the concept of being “forsaken” also emerged, referring to being left behind in education programs. “Hmmm! Are we useful that they will think of any education programme that will benefit us? We completely forsaken because we are old” (Participant 8).

“We are abandoned in this center. The educators put their energy and efforts in rehabilitating and educating the younger prisoners. Nobody considers us for any reason and it is affecting our self-esteem. I would have loved to participate in vocational education if little concern and love was shown to me” (Participant 10).

### **Theme 3: Challenges of participating in education programs with the younger incarcerated individuals**

The account from this study suggests that there are many challenges for graying incarcerated individuals, specifically related to participating in education programs with younger incarcerated persons.

#### ***Bullying and insults***

Graying incarcerated individuals were not comfortable participating in education pro-

grams with the younger incarcerated. They felt bullied and insulted. In their words: “I was called ... old fool (shakes his head) because I mistakenly misplaced a working tool given to me by a younger incarcerated person” (Participant 4).

“I asked a younger prisoner to help me pronounce a particular word during adult education class; he looked at me, sighed, and walked away without saying a word. I was confused because I don’t know the offense I have committed. If he doesn’t know it, he would have said so than that insult” (Participant 6).

“These children (younger prisoners) do not know that we are their fathers. They insult us at any slightest provocation. The other day in the workshop, I asked a younger prisoner to help me with a working tool. The insult I got could better be imagined than told. ... (sighs). I was meant to understand that my mates are not in prison” (Participant 2).

Some incarcerated persons did not participate in any of the education programs because of their fear of being bullied or insulted. “I prefer staying on my own rather than letting the younger ones, that I have their age as children at home, insult me” (Participant 7).

### ***Physical assault***

Some graying incarcerated individuals who attended education programs were actually physically assaulted by younger prisoners. They believe that attending education programs with the younger persons exposes them to physical assault. For these participants, they were trying to avoid assaults from the younger incarcerated by not engaging in educational programs. The views from some participants are seen as barriers/challenges that affect their participation in correctional education. “I was hit with a stick on my leg (shows the researcher) when I mistakenly misplaced a working tool given to me by a younger incarcerated” (Participant 4). One graying participant who did not actually participate in education explained what he had seen and this perhaps helps to explain why he does not attend education program: “I pitied an older incarcerated prisoner who cried like a child on the day a younger prisoner hit him with a hammer on his fingers in the workshop. He came back to the cell with swollen fingers. We have real bad boys in prisons” (Participant 12).

### **Theme 4: Measures to enhance education programs for graying incarcerated persons**

The analysis further showed that participants were of the view that education programs that address the needs of incarcerated persons should be designed to accommodate them. For example, basic education courses could be beneficial for older prisoners if they accommodated a different range of learning abilities, particularly related to health and well-being.

### ***General well-being***

Some participants were of the view that education programs for the graying incarcerated should be tailored towards integrating physical education and healthcare components into educational programs to address the unique health needs of ageing incarcerated. Hear them:

“I wish they have an education program that will be teaching us how to age gracefully while in prison. It will motivate and help many of us” (Participant 2).

“Physical education for the older adult incarcerated persons should also be considered such as chair exercises and shuffleboards” (Participant 1).

“What to eat and what not to eat at this age for me is part of education program for the incarcerated persons who are of age like me. This type of education needs to be incorporated in education program too” (Participant 2).

One participant summarized thus: “I feel that programs like walks and horseshoes. Another aspect of education program that is very vital for us is health education. This will enable us to understand our general health well-being such as blood pressure check, sugar level check, and the type of food to be taken even though that opportunity is not provided in this prison” (Participant 13).

### **Discussion**

This is the only qualitative research that we are aware of that examines how correctional education programs have affected incarcerated people who are graying. Fifteen older incar-

cerated people who were graying provided data for the study. Their ages ranged from 60 to 70 years. The overall findings of this study indicate that, contrary to what was suggested by other studies, there were no education programs specifically created for incarcerated individuals who were graying (Porporino, 2014; Wolfe, 2018). However, few of the participants varied in their perceptions of education programs for older adult prisoners. They revealed that craft work, tailoring and adult education (Quan-Baffour & Zawada, 2012; Ngubane, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Ekpeyong & Undutimi, 2016) were the existing education programs graying incarcerated persons may participate in even though they are meant for all convicted incarcerated individuals but they can also serve the needs of graying persons. While some participants were involved in the already existing education programs designed for every convicted incarcerated individual, old age and health appear to be the primary drivers for some not participating in the program. This view has been corroborated by previous literature (Ginn & Robinson, 2012; Porporino, 2014; Aborisade et al. 2016). Additionally, participants felt that the already existing education programs are for the younger prisoners who may need it when released from prison. Aborisade et al (2016) asserts that prison education programs were designed for young and able-bodied men. However, despite the intrinsic barriers, some participants who were involved in correctional education programs have benefitted from the program such as skills acquisition. Also, the concept of “forgotten” emerged during interviews. Participants noted that they are forgotten in activities going on in the center and it affects their self-esteem. The lack of educational opportunities for older incarcerated individuals hinders their capacity to develop confidence and their sense of self-worth (Lane, 2017; Langat et al., 2015). For prisons offering vocational education and rehabilitation, high priority was not given to older prisoners (Klein, 2004; Snyder et al., 2009). Bullying and insults; and physical assault were seen as challenges in participating in education programs with the younger prisoners. Graying persons may be intimidated and bullied by younger prisoners to the point that they become afraid of them and withdraw from educational activities (Patrick & Lane, 2017).

Furthermore, some participants in this study were of the view that incorporating education programs suitable for the graying prisoners will help enhance correctional education. They suggested that their general well-being such as health education, physical education involving chair exercise and shuffleboards (Synder et al., 2009) and nutritional education be introduced as part of education programs for the older incarcerated adults. This will help bring about all inclusive education programs for the incarcerated persons in Nigerian correctional institutions.

### **Study limitation**

The views expressed in the study were that of male graying incarcerated persons only. The views of female incarcerated were not sought. Therefore, it should not be generalized as views of all the graying persons in correctional center. Secondly, the study was carried out in one correctional centre in Nigeria. This may not be a true representation of what is obtainable in other correctional centers in the country.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The only tool that has been proven to work in rehabilitating incarcerated persons is education. In Nigeria, correctional education programs are designed for convicted incarcerated persons. The age of prisoners was not considered when these programs were designed. To this end, the graying incarcerated persons were not specially accommodated in correctional education. This makes it difficult for older incarcerated adults to participate and be fully active in the program. Prison education is designed in such a way that it favors only the younger prisoners with older incarcerated adults feeling “forgotten”. Bullying and insults deter these graying ones from active involvement in education programs. To enhance the participation of the graying incarcerated individuals, education programs such as chair exercises, shuffleboards and health education were seen as the way forward. Social work as a professional discipline provides services at different levels for different populations.

In the light of the evidence provided by this present study, there is a need for the Nige-

rian government through the prison authorities to design, incorporate and approve education programs that are suitable for graying prisoners. In other words, educational programs specific to the graying population's needs should be incorporated. Alternatively, the existing education programs should be revamped to accommodate the educational needs of graying incarcerated persons. This will help boost the rate at which older incarcerated adults participate in education programs. It will ensure that every convicted prisoner benefits from the program. This study has shown the need for prison authorities to regularly monitor graying incarcerated individuals to ensure they are not being bullied or insulted. The sense of 'belongingness' should be shown to this category of prisoners as it will make them feel cared for by both the younger prisoners and prison officials. Policies that will address the educational needs of graying incarcerated individuals should be considered and made available for them. In the context of correctional facilities, where a significant portion of the population comprises graying incarcerated, it becomes apparent that the majority of graying persons within this environment often grapple with feelings of insecurity, perceive themselves as physically unfit, or struggle to envision how educational programs could truly benefit them. However, within this seemingly prevalent skepticism, it is imperative for policymakers to attentively listen to and acknowledge the voices of those elders who do not conform to this sentiment. There exists a cohort of graying incarcerated individuals who, despite the challenges they face, recognize the relevance and pressing need for education that is specifically tailored to their unique moment on the life course. These forward-thinking individuals see education not merely as a theoretical pursuit but as a tangible lifeline that can positively impact their well-being within the correctional setting. Their insight into the transformative potential of education reflects a profound understanding of how learning can mitigate feelings of neglect and abandonment. By lending an ear to this minority within the ageing population, policymakers may gain access to valuable perspectives that can inform and shape the design of educational programs. Therefore, policymakers should consider actively involving these forward-thinking elders in the decision-making processes surrounding educational initiatives. Ultimately, by championing the perspectives of those who see the value in education tailored to their unique circumstances, policymakers can contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and effective educational landscape within correctional facilities, fostering positive change and enhancing the overall well-being of ageing incarcerated individuals.

Finally, social workers should be made available to graying incarcerated persons in Nigerian correctional centers who can evaluate, educate, guide, and talk through emotions with older incarcerated adults—something otherwise impossible inside prison walls. They can also play a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of older incarcerated individuals to access education through policy advocacy (advocating for the development and implementation of educational programs specifically designed for graying incarcerated), needs assessment (conducting thorough needs assessments to identify the educational needs and preferences of older incarcerated individuals). Social workers can facilitate the integration of graying incarcerated into existing educational programs. This can be achieved by collaborating with educators to modify existing educational curricula to accommodate the diverse learning needs of older individuals, implement flexible learning options that consider the physical and cognitive abilities of graying incarcerated. They can help in developing and implementing conflict resolution programs within correctional centers to address interpersonal issues between older and younger incarcerated. By actively engaging in these initiatives, social workers can contribute significantly to creating a more inclusive, safe, and supportive educational environment for graying incarcerated individuals, ultimately enhancing their general well-being.

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### **Availability of data and materials**

All relevant data are within the manuscript.

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests