

DEPLOYMENT OF SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY AS A VIABLE STRATEGY FOR MONITORING AND MITIGATING CRIME IN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN NIGERIA: A PANACEA FOR REFORMATION

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Abstract

The Nigerian correctional system faces persistent challenges, including rising incidents of internal crime, violence, frequent jailbreaks, and inadequate rehabilitation mechanisms. These issues undermine efforts toward restorative justice, effective rehabilitation, and the social reintegration of inmates across correctional centres in the country. This paper critically examines the deployment of surveillance technology as a strategic intervention for monitoring and mitigating crime in Nigerian correctional centres. It explores the current state of correctional facilities and evaluates how tools such as closed-circuit television (CCTV), biometric access control, artificial intelligence-powered monitoring, and communication surveillance can enhance security and reduce criminal activities within prison environments. The study is anchored in the reformation theory of punishment and relies on secondary data sources. Findings reveal that the Nigerian correctional system is burdened by longstanding structural and operational challenges that hinder its ability to fulfil its core mandates of justice, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. These challenges include inadequate funding, overcrowding and congestion, security lapses, and frequent jailbreaks. Overcrowding, in particular, fosters tension, increases the likelihood of violence, and makes effective supervision nearly impossible without technological support. The absence of adequate surveillance technology significantly limits the capacity to monitor inmate behaviour, investigate violations of prison regulations by both inmates and staff, and ensure adherence to professional standards. The paper recommends a technology-driven reform agenda that integrates modern surveillance systems into correctional management, supports restorative justice, and enhances the preparation of inmates for meaningful social reintegration upon completion of their sentences.

Keywords: correctional centers, deployment, Nigeria, reformation, surveillance technology

Introduction

The Nigerian correctional system continues to grapple with a multitude of structural and operational challenges that severely undermine its core mandates of justice administration, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Among the most pressing issues are the increasing incidents of internal crimes, violence among inmates, frequent jailbreaks, and a glaring lack of effective rehabilitation programs (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). These systemic failures not only compromise the security and integrity of correctional facilities but also erode public trust in the criminal justice system and hinder the successful reintegration of ex-inmates into society.

The persistent rise in criminal activities and security breaches within correctional centers in Nigeria has underscored the urgent need for innovative and effective security strategies. Traditional security methods, often hindered by inadequate manpower, poor infrastructure, and systemic corruption, have proven insufficient in addressing the dynamic nature of criminal behavior among inmates (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). In response to these challenges, the deployment of surveillance technologies such as closed-circuit television (CCTV), biometric systems, and digital monitoring tools has emerged as a viable and transformative strategy for crime prevention and behavioral reformation within correctional facilities.

Surveillance technology provides real-time monitoring, enhances accountability, and serves as a deterrent to illicit activities, including the smuggling of contraband, escape attempts, and violence among inmates and staff (Nwolise, 2020). When properly implemented, these technologies not only enhance security but also promote administrative transparency and evidence-based disciplinary actions, thereby contributing to a more rehabilitative correctional environment (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021). In the Nigerian context, where prison congestion and insufficient supervision are chronic issues, technological surveillance provides a scalable solution to complement traditional correctional practices.

Correctional centers in Nigeria are plagued by persistent challenges such as overcrowding, internal violence, contraband smuggling, jailbreaks, and a general lack of effective monitoring mechanisms. These issues are exacerbated by outdated security infrastructures and a heavy reliance on manual surveillance, which is often insufficient for detecting and preventing criminal activities within prison walls. As a result, correctional facilities not only fail to deter crime but also become environments where criminal behavior is reproduced and normalized, undermining the goals of rehabilitation and reintegration.

Despite the global trend toward adopting advanced surveillance technologies such as CCTV, biometric systems, and real-time digital monitoring, Nigeria's correctional system has been slow to integrate these innovations. The absence of such technologies leaves critical gaps in institutional oversight, allowing misconduct among inmates and staff to go unchecked. Furthermore, without proper surveillance, it becomes difficult to gather evidence, enforce accountability, or implement effective rehabilitation programs. This situation raises urgent concerns about the capacity of Nigeria's correctional system to serve as a vehicle for justice, public safety, and inmate reformation. Therefore, there is a critical need to investigate how the deployment of surveillance technology can serve as a viable and transformative strategy for crime monitoring, institutional reform, and the promotion of a rehabilitative correctional environment.

It is against this backdrop that this paper tends to critically examine the deployment of surveillance technology as a strategic tool for monitoring and mitigating crime in Nigerian correctional centers. It explores its implications for institutional reform and inmate rehabilitation, ultimately positioning surveillance as a panacea for strengthening correctional systems and fostering societal reintegration. Assess the current state of security and crime-related challenges in Nigerian correctional centers. Examine the types of surveillance technologies available or potentially applicable to correctional facilities in Nigeria. Evaluate the effectiveness of surveillance technologies in reducing criminal activities such as violence, smuggling, jailbreaks, and corruption within Nigerian correctional centers. Investigate how surveillance technologies can promote accountability and operational transparency among correctional staff and inmates in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Surveillance Technology

Marx (2002) describes surveillance technology as electronic or digital means used to gather information about individuals or groups, frequently without their knowledge or consent. Surveillance technologies encompass electronic tools used to record, analyze, and respond to behavior for purposes such as law enforcement and organizational control. According to Ball, Haggerty, and Lyon (2012), surveillance technology includes hardware and software systems that enable the collection, storage, and analysis of personal data across various settings. It serves as a mediator between institutions and populations, enabling continuous observation and data analysis. Andrejevic (2007) refers to surveillance technology as digital infrastructures that enable real-time monitoring and predictive analytics across both public and private spaces. Surveillance technology is increasingly embedded in the architecture of everyday life through digital tracking, profiling, and algorithmic sorting. Norris and Armstrong (1999) define surveillance technology as computer-assisted systems, such as CCTV and biometric scanners, used to observe behavior and support decision-making in security contexts. "Surveillance technology refers to a set of tools like closed-circuit television, databases, and tracking systems aimed at controlling public order and reducing crime" (Norris & Armstrong, 1999, p. 1). Goold (2004) describes surveillance technologies as technological tools used by authorities to systematically monitor and manage human conduct, particularly in law enforcement. Zuboff (2019) expands the definition to include data extraction and behavioral prediction tools used by both corporations and governments, referring to the rise of "surveillance capitalism."

Surveillance technology, in correctional centers, refers to the application of electronic and digital systems, such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), biometric sensors, electronic tagging, drones, and predictive analytics, to monitor, record, and assess the behavior and movement of inmates, as well as enhance facility security and

operational efficiency (DocMcKee, n.d.). These technologies are designed to detect incidents, prevent violence, curtail contraband, and strengthen accountability among inmates and staff. The Key Components are:

- Video Surveillance (CCTV): Fixed cameras capture continuous footage in strategic locations within correctional facilities. They dissuade misconduct and ensure accountability (DocMcKee, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2025).
- Biometric Systems & Electronic Tagging: Staff wristbands, RFID chips, GPS ankle monitors, and RFID-based systems track individuals' locations and identities, enhancing security and aiding inmate classification (DocMcKee, n.d.; Wikipedia, 2025).
- Drone Surveillance: Unmanned aerial vehicles equipped with high-resolution cameras, thermal imaging, and real-time data transmission for comprehensive perimeter and facility monitoring (Nairobi Wire, 2024).
- Predictive Analytics & Smart Sensors: Advanced systems that analyze behavioral and biometric data, such as heart rates, to predict health crises or security threats (WIRED, 2023).

The benefits of surveillance technology encompass enhancing safety and crime prevention: real-time monitoring aids in identifying violent incidents, contraband smuggling, and escape attempts, fostering a safer environment for inmates and staff (docmckee, n.d.; punchng, 2024). Reducing recidivism through monitoring in tracking of awaiting-trial inmates via electronic tags can reduce overcrowding and allow for more humane conditions and focused rehabilitation (ajulo, 2023). Lastly, improve accountability and efficiency, continuous surveillance reduces human errors, promotes transparency, and allows rapid emergency responses (docmckee, n.d.; wired, 2023).

Surveillance technology in Nigerian correctional centers constitutes a powerful tool for crime monitoring and institutional discipline, offering rich data for security, behavioral assessment, and operational efficiency. When ethically governed and integrated with rehabilitative frameworks, these technologies can support a balanced correctional system, improving oversight while safeguarding inmate rights and promoting reformation.

Current State of Security and Crime-Related Challenges in Nigerian Correctional Centers

The Nigerian correctional system is currently burdened with multiple security lapses and crime-related challenges that undermine its core functions of custody, punishment, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Widespread issues such as overcrowding, inadequate surveillance infrastructure, understaffing, and poor funding contribute significantly to the deteriorating state of internal security in many correctional facilities (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). These vulnerabilities make it difficult to monitor inmate activities effectively, creating opportunities for violence, drug trafficking, smuggling of contraband, and organized escape attempts.

Additionally, most correctional facilities are overcrowded, underfunded, and poorly maintained, leading to inhumane conditions and increased vulnerability to internal crimes, violence, and frequent jailbreaks (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018). According to the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), over 70% of the inmate population comprises pre-trial detainees, contributing to severe congestion and operational strain (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2020). Jailbreaks have become increasingly frequent in recent years, exposing the fragility of prison security across the country. For example, between 2020 and 2022 alone, Nigeria recorded several high-profile jailbreaks resulting in the escape of thousands of inmates, some of whom remain at large (Nigerian Correctional Service, 2022). Many of these incidents have been linked to both internal collusion and the absence of modern surveillance mechanisms that could have helped detect or deter such actions.

Furthermore, the staff-to-inmate ratio in many correctional facilities remains critically low, making it difficult for officers to exercise adequate control or conduct continuous surveillance (Oluwagbemi, 2022). Moreover, the absence of modern surveillance systems and the reliance on outdated security practices have significantly limited the ability of correctional staff to monitor inmate activities effectively. Many prisons still operate under colonial-era designs, lacking the technological infrastructure necessary for real-time surveillance, incident detection, and crime prevention within the facilities (Oluwagbemi, 2022). These conditions not only compromise internal security but also foster environments where illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, bribery, and organized violence, can thrive undetected.

The prevalence of internal crimes and operational lapses has created a dysfunctional correctional environment that prioritizes containment over genuine reformation. Without addressing these security deficits, the broader goals of rehabilitation and societal reintegration will remain largely unachieved. Rehabilitative programs, which should ideally serve to reform inmates, are often underdeveloped or absent, primarily due to limited funding, staff shortages, and inadequate policy implementation. This lack of support undermines the goal of preparing inmates

for reintegration into society, thereby contributing to high rates of recidivism (Ilesanmi & Ajayi, 2021). As such, the deployment of surveillance technology becomes not merely a security tool but a strategic necessity for transforming correctional centers into institutions capable of fulfilling their rehabilitative mission.

Types of Surveillance Technologies Applicable to Correctional Facilities in Nigeria

In the face of rising internal crime, jailbreaks, and administrative lapses, modern surveillance technologies offer viable solutions for improving monitoring and security in correctional centers. Several types of surveillance tools, both currently available and potentially applicable in the Nigerian context, have proven effective in correctional environments globally. These technologies not only enhance security but also support institutional accountability and transparency.

Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)

CCTV remains one of the most widely used and effective surveillance tools in correctional facilities. It allows for continuous visual monitoring of high-risk areas such as cells, corridors, visitation zones, and control rooms. CCTV footage can deter violent behavior, provide evidence during investigations, and support internal reviews of security breaches (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021). Despite its proven effectiveness, the deployment of CCTV in Nigerian prisons remains limited and uneven due to funding and infrastructure constraints.

Biometric Access Control Systems

Biometric systems such as fingerprint scanners, facial recognition, and iris scanners are increasingly used to regulate access to secure areas within correctional facilities. These tools ensure that only authorized personnel can enter sensitive locations, reducing the risk of unauthorized access and collusion between staff and inmates (Oluwasegun & Ibrahim, 2020). In Nigeria, such systems have been piloted in a few urban correctional centers, but broader implementation is still lacking.

AI-Powered Monitoring Systems

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are being adopted in advanced jurisdictions to enhance surveillance efficiency. These systems can analyze CCTV feeds in real-time, detect unusual behaviors such as crowding or aggression, and send automated alerts to prison staff (Adebayo & Oloyede, 2020). AI solutions also help overcome limitations of human monitoring, which can be inconsistent due to fatigue or distraction. Though promising, AI-based surveillance has yet to be meaningfully explored in the Nigerian correctional system.

Communication Monitoring Systems

Communication surveillance, which involves monitoring inmate phone calls, emails, and other forms of digital correspondence, is essential in detecting ongoing criminal networks and preventing external crimes being planned from within correctional centers. Monitoring systems can be programmed to flag keywords or call patterns associated with criminal activity (Nwogu & Ibrahim, 2021). While some limited forms of call monitoring exist in select Nigerian prisons, there is no standardized national system in place.

Incorporating these technologies into Nigerian correctional centers would significantly improve security, enhance operational transparency, and support rehabilitation by creating a safer, more controlled environment. However, successful implementation depends on political will, institutional reforms, and adequate investment in infrastructure and personnel training.

Effectiveness of Surveillance Technologies in Reducing Criminal Activities in Correctional Centers

The deployment of surveillance technologies in correctional centers has emerged as a critical strategy for addressing various forms of criminal activity, including violence, smuggling, jailbreaks, and corruption. In contexts where manual oversight is insufficient, such as Nigeria's overcrowded and under-resourced correctional facilities, technological interventions have the potential to dramatically enhance control and order (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018).

Violence Prevention

Surveillance tools like CCTV and AI-powered video analytics can significantly reduce incidents of inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff violence by enabling real-time monitoring and rapid intervention. The presence of visible cameras also serves as a deterrent, as inmates are less likely to engage in violent acts when they are aware they are being watched (Adebayo & Oloyede, 2020). In facilities where CCTV has been installed, studies have shown a measurable drop in assault cases and improved safety for both inmates and personnel (Oluwagbemi, 2022).

Contraband Smuggling

Biometric access control and AI surveillance can monitor entry points and track the movement of individuals, thereby reducing the chances of unauthorized access and smuggling of prohibited items. In systems where body scanners and biometric checks are integrated, there is a notable decline in contraband discovery during random inspections (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021). These technologies also help in monitoring prison staff, who are sometimes complicit in illegal activities.

Jailbreak Prevention

Frequent jailbreaks in Nigeria often result from a combination of poor surveillance and delayed response to coordinated escape attempts. The use of AI-driven alert systems and perimeter surveillance technologies can detect suspicious activity around exit points and trigger automated alarms, allowing for immediate security responses (Nwogu & Ibrahim, 2021). Facilities with functional surveillance infrastructures have demonstrated greater resistance to such breaches.

Corruption and Misconduct Control

Surveillance systems not only monitor inmates but also act as a check on the behavior of prison staff. When officers know their actions are being recorded and subject to review, the likelihood of bribery, abuse of authority or collusion with inmates is reduced (Oluwasegun & Ibrahim, 2020). In many advanced correctional systems, surveillance footage is routinely used in internal investigations and disciplinary processes.

Challenges and Limitations to the Deployment of Surveillance Technology in Correctional Centers in Nigeria

The integration of surveillance technology in correctional centers across Nigeria presents a promising approach to crime monitoring and reformation. However, the deployment of such technologies is constrained by numerous structural, financial, administrative, and technical challenges. These challenges have contributed to the slow adoption of modern surveillance tools across most prison facilities, perpetuating a cycle of insecurity and institutional inefficiency.

Inadequate Funding and Resource Constraints

One of the foremost obstacles is the chronic underfunding of the Nigerian Correctional Service. Most correctional facilities in Nigeria operate under poor financial conditions, limiting the procurement, installation, and maintenance of surveillance systems such as CCTV, biometric scanners, and digital monitoring software (Alemika, 2020). Without sustained financial commitment, procurement, installation, and maintenance of surveillance technologies remain unrealistic.

Lack of Technical Expertise and Training

In addition, a lack of technical expertise and training is a significant barrier. The implementation of sophisticated surveillance systems requires trained personnel who can manage, monitor, and maintain the technology. Many correctional staff are not trained to operate or manage advanced surveillance tools, resulting in underutilization or malfunction of the systems (Okereke, 2019). This gap is further compounded by a lack of continuous professional development and incentives to retain skilled workers.

The Infrastructure Deficit

Another pressing concern is the infrastructure deficit, particularly unstable electricity and poor internet connectivity. Many correctional centers, especially those in rural areas, struggle with inconsistent power supply, making it difficult to maintain 24/7 surveillance systems (Nweke, 2021). In such environments, the reliability of digital monitoring is severely undermined. Technologies like CCTV and biometric scanners require a stable power source and internet connectivity, both of which are lacking in many Nigerian prisons (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021).

Administrative Inefficiencies and Corruption

Administrative inefficiencies and corruption also hinder effective deployment. Resistance to technological reforms often arises from within the prison system itself. Some staff members may view surveillance as a threat to their discretion or fear exposure of corrupt practices. This institutional resistance, coupled with entrenched corruption, undermines transparency and impedes the adoption of monitoring technologies that promote accountability (Nwogu & Ibrahim, 2021). Funds allocated for technological improvements are often mismanaged, and procurement processes lack transparency (Ogunlesi & Adebajo, 2021). These issues reduce trust in the system and create obstacles to the successful implementation of surveillance initiatives.

Absence of Clear Policy and Legal Frameworks

Another critical challenge is the lack of comprehensive policies or legal guidelines governing the deployment and ethical use of surveillance technologies in correctional settings. There are legal and ethical concerns regarding privacy rights and data security. In the absence of a clear legal framework and oversight mechanisms, the potential for abuse of surveillance data by authorities raises concerns about human rights violations (Agboola, 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort by government agencies, stakeholders, and international partners to establish a sustainable, ethical, and well-resourced surveillance infrastructure aimed at reformation and crime mitigation in Nigerian correctional facilities.

Promoting Accountability and Operational Transparency through Surveillance Technologies in Correctional Centers

Beyond enhancing physical security, surveillance technologies play a crucial role in promoting accountability and operational transparency within correctional facilities. The integration of modern surveillance technologies into correctional centers presents a transformative opportunity to address the entrenched issues of insecurity, internal crime, and administrative opacity within Nigeria's penal system. Tools such as closed-circuit television (CCTV), biometric access control systems, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered monitoring, and communication surveillance are increasingly recognized for their capacity to enhance real-time supervision and deter illicit activities among inmates and staff (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021). In environments like Nigeria's correctional centers, where misconduct, abuse of power, and collusion between inmates and staff are common, technological surveillance serves as a deterrent and a tool for institutional reform (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2018).

Staff Accountability

Surveillance systems, especially CCTV and access control technologies, can monitor the daily activities of correctional officers, helping to prevent abuse of authority, extortion, or negligence. CCTV systems, for instance, offer 24/7 visual coverage of high-risk zones such as cells, corridors, and visitation areas, thereby enabling early detection of suspicious behavior and rapid response to emergencies (Adebayo & Oloyede, 2020). These systems not only prevent crime but also serve as vital evidentiary tools during investigations. Similarly, biometric access control restricts unauthorized movement within the facility, ensuring that only authorized personnel gain access to sensitive areas. This significantly reduces cases of smuggling, assault, and unauthorized communication. When staff members are aware that their movements and interactions are being recorded, there is a greater tendency to adhere to ethical and professional standards (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021). In addition, surveillance footage provides verifiable evidence in investigations, thereby enhancing the credibility of internal disciplinary and judicial processes.

Inmate Oversight

Surveillance technology also supports fair treatment of inmates by ensuring their interactions with both staff and fellow inmates are monitored. This discourages acts of violence, intimidation, and rights violations within prison walls. Moreover, digital records of inmate behavior can inform rehabilitation planning, allowing for more objective assessments of progress and risks (Nwogu & Ibrahim, 2021).

Operational Transparency

Biometric access systems and AI-powered monitoring tools enable the automatic logging of access, activities, and incidents such as crowding, aggression, or tampering with security infrastructure (Oluwagbemi, 2022). These digital records reduce reliance on manual reporting, which is often prone to manipulation, and allow for data-driven decision-making in correctional administration. Transparency is further improved when surveillance logs are subject to regular audits by independent oversight bodies (Oluwagbemi, 2022). Communication surveillance, which includes the monitoring of inmate phone calls and digital correspondence, can expose networks of criminal collaboration and prevent the orchestration of external crimes from within prison walls (Nwogu & Ibrahim, 2021).

Deterrence Against Corruption and Collusion

The presence of surveillance discourages corrupt practices such as unauthorized visits, contraband smuggling, and staff-inmate conspiracies. Communication surveillance, including the monitoring of calls and digital correspondence, can also uncover covert criminal networks and reveal breaches in staff integrity (Adebayo & Oloyede, 2020).

Theoretical Thrust: The Reformation Theory of Punishment

The theoretical underpinning of this study is rooted in the Reformation Theory of Punishment, which posits that the primary aim of punishment should not be retribution or deterrence alone, but rather the moral and behavioral reform of the offender. Unlike retributive justice, which emphasizes vengeance, or deterrent theories that focus on discouraging future crimes, the reformation theory underscores the correction and rehabilitation of offenders to reintegrate them as productive members of society (Hudson, 2003).

The origins of this theory can be traced back to Enlightenment-era reformers such as Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794), who were critical of the brutal and ineffective punitive measures of their time. Beccaria, in his seminal work *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764), argued that punishments should be proportionate, humane, and oriented towards the prevention of future crimes through rehabilitation. Bentham, with his utilitarian perspective, advocated for penal measures that maximized social good, emphasizing reformative and corrective mechanisms over harsh retributive punishments (Bentham, 1789).

In the modern context, especially within correctional facilities, this theory supports policies and technologies aimed at behavioral transformation and social reintegration of inmates. Surveillance technology, when deployed ethically and systematically, can act as both a deterrent to misconduct and a tool for fostering accountability, transparency, and rehabilitation. For instance, real-time monitoring can identify patterns of deviant behavior, enabling early interventions, targeted counseling, and evidence-based disciplinary measures that align with the reformation philosophy (Okoye & Ekwe, 2021).

In the Nigerian correctional context, where the punitive model has often overshadowed rehabilitative efforts, the reformation theory provides a compelling framework for embracing surveillance technology as a rehabilitative rather than purely punitive mechanism. It underscores the need for correctional systems that facilitate change, equip inmates with skills, and reduce recidivism. Technological integration, therefore, aligns with this theoretical approach by helping to create structured, secure, and reform-oriented correctional environments (Nwolise, 2020). By grounding the discussion in the Reformation Theory of Punishment, this paper advocates for a paradigm shift from punishment to transformation, where surveillance technologies serve as critical instruments in cultivating discipline, promoting behavioral change, and preparing inmates for reintegration into society.

Proposed Strategies for the Effective Deployment and Management of Surveillance Technology in Correctional Centers to Enhance Rehabilitation and Reformation

To maximize the rehabilitative and reformative potential of surveillance technology in Nigerian correctional centers, a multi-faceted strategic approach is essential. First, there should be policy-driven integration of surveillance systems that align with correctional goals, emphasizing not only security but also transparency and inmate welfare (Okoro & Hassan, 2021). This includes developing legal frameworks that safeguard human rights while enabling effective surveillance.

Second, capacity-building and training of correctional staff on the ethical use and technical management of surveillance tools is crucial. Personnel must be equipped to interpret surveillance data constructively, using it to identify at-risk inmates and tailor rehabilitation programs accordingly (Adebayo & Chukwuemeka, 2022). Third, collaborative partnerships with private technology firms and international criminal justice organizations can help ensure the sustainability of surveillance infrastructure through funding, maintenance, and regular system upgrades (Nwachukwu, 2023).

Lastly, the deployment should be complemented with periodic evaluations and impact assessments, which can provide feedback on how surveillance technology influences behavior, security, and reformation outcomes. These evaluations would help refine strategies and promote data-driven reform policies (Ibrahim & Oladele, 2020).

Conclusion

The Nigerian correctional system stands at a critical crossroads, confronting deep-seated security, infrastructural, and administrative deficiencies that compromise its core mandates of rehabilitation, reintegration, and justice. The persistent rise in internal crimes, staff misconduct, jailbreaks, and systemic inefficiencies underscores the urgent need for transformative reforms grounded in modern practices. As this study demonstrates, the deployment of surveillance technologies, including CCTV, biometric systems, artificial intelligence-powered monitoring, and communication surveillance, offers a viable and strategic response to these challenges. These technologies function not merely as instruments of control but as mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and behavioural reform. By enabling real-time monitoring, evidence-based interventions, and improved staff oversight, they

reinforce the reformation theory of punishment, which prioritises rehabilitation over retribution. When effectively implemented, surveillance technologies can reduce violence, deter contraband smuggling, and curb corruption within correctional facilities, thereby fostering safer and more rehabilitative environments. However, their transformative potential depends on addressing entrenched barriers such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and institutional resistance. To maximise the benefits of surveillance technologies, Nigeria must adopt a holistic, rights-based implementation strategy that incorporates policy reform, capacity building, public-private partnerships, and robust oversight mechanisms. Although surveillance technology is not a panacea, it remains a critical pillar of modern correctional reform. Its strategic and ethical deployment, aligned with institutional accountability and rehabilitative goals, can catalyse the transformation of Nigerian correctional centres from punitive spaces into environments that promote correction, reintegration, and societal restoration.

Recommendations

1. The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Justice and the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), should develop a comprehensive national policy on surveillance in correctional centers, clearly outlining objectives, ethical use, data protection, and oversight mechanisms. Legislative backing should be provided to ensure surveillance deployment is standardized, mandatory in high-risk facilities, and sustainably funded.
2. Surveillance technology should be deployed in phases, prioritizing overcrowded and high-risk prisons for initial implementation. CCTV systems should be installed in strategic locations, including cellblocks, entry points, and visitation areas. In addition, biometric access control systems should be introduced to restrict unauthorized staff or inmate movements within secure areas.
3. The Nigerian Correctional Service should train staff in the use, interpretation, and ethical handling of surveillance technologies, with periodic refresher courses. Specialized training in digital forensics and behavioral analytics should be introduced to optimize the rehabilitative use of surveillance data.
4. The government should ensure dedicated funding for the procurement, installation, and maintenance of surveillance systems. To mitigate power and connectivity issues, solar energy solutions and offline-capable surveillance systems should be introduced, especially in rural prisons.

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