
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS ON LONG- TERM SERVING INMATES AND ATTENDANT COPING STRATEGIES: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The general aim of this study examined and analysed the psychological distress and level of coping in inmates. The concept of imprisonment was expressed. The researcher looked at the pattern of sentence in Nasarawa, the trends and perspectives of prisoner's mental assessment, the general review of Nigerian prisons system as different from other areas. All these are in literature review. In the discussion, human rights of prisoners in Nigeria, the health and safety practices in the prisons, how prisoners distress are handled by the authorities, what to do to reduce the distress, the range of prison sentences and the age group of the prisoners that are likely to suffer from distress are highlighted. The study consists of one hundred respondents (100). They were sampled from Keffi Prisons Nasarawa state. Age ranges of respondents were aged 18 to 60 years, randomly selected from the prisons in Keffi town. A validated instrument known as questionnaire on psychological distress were administered on the respondents in groups of A and B that is male and female respondents. There was no difference between the long term and short term inmates hence the calculated value is 0.16 at 0.5, $df = 1$ in hypothesis one. In hypothesis two there is coping adjustment between male and female inmates hence it is accepted with 4.17 at 0.5, $df = 1$. Base on these findings, it was recommended that the prison environment should be free of stressful events, such as using shift buckets and should encourage more religious activities in the prison yard.

Keywords: *Psychological distress, long term serving inmates, short term serving inmates, prisons, coping strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The prison is a place of short and long-term confinement for those convicted of serious crime. It is a world within another world, a place where the individuals are physically and mentally deprived of freedom, leading to low self esteem and psychological upheaval. On the other hand, the public has their freedom, which is moving about to wherever they want to go freely without restriction; but they are psychologically distress due to daily hassles of everyday life and family problems. Prisons are found in every country of the world. In many countries, imprisonment is as a form of punishment. Imprisonment has been seen as a counter productive in the rehabilitation and reintegration of those charged with minor crimes, as well as for certain vulnerable populations. Though the use of imprisonment's rising throughout the world, there is still little evidence that its increasing use is improving. As at 2005, there were more than nine million prisoners worldwide, and that number is growing. The growing numbers of prisoners are leading to severe over crowding in prisons. Individual's liberty is one of the most fundamental of human rights. The loss of liberty that results from imprisonment is inevitable but in practice, imprisonment regularly impinges several other human rights as well. In many countries, prisoners are deprived of basic amenities of life. They are held in grossly overcrowded conditions, poorly clothed and underfed. Consequent to this, they are vulnerable to

diseases and yet they are given poor medication. Beside they find it difficult to contact with their family members, thereby placing the life of the prisoners at risk. Imprisonment is expensive the cost of it worldwide is hard to calculate, but the best estimates are in the region of US \$62.5 billion according to 1997 statistics (United Nations 2007) it has direct cost and indirect cost. Direct costs include building and administering prisons as well as housing, feeding, and caring for prisoners. Then the significant indirect costs for imprisonment may affect the wider community in various negative ways. For instance, prisons are incubators of diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS, when they are overcrowded. When they are released, they may contribute to the further spread of such diseases. According to United Nations (2007) imprisonment is overused and as a result it is essential that policy makers take a close look at who is being held in prison, why they are there, and for how long they are being detained. A General textbook of Nursing; Stated that stress causes the kidney to excrete additional amounts of potassium, which may results as severe diarrhea, causing dehydration in individuals. This is commonly seen in prison inmates and some less fortunate individuals with low socio-economic income. The main function of the prison services to offenders is to make the psychological distress free and become responsible citizens upon release. Nigerian Prisons are "glorified animal cages" and people sent there, get worst experience of their lives. But research has shown that even the public is also stressful as relate to life outside prison environment. It has shown that, poverty, unemployment is some major form of stress. A human beings make attempts to find, better ways of minimizing the disappointments and sorrows of life and maximize the joy of living is enough stress on them. A scholar said "there exist, no more difficult art than the art of living". This statement about stress means that it belongs to everyone especially in a country like Nigeria of today with so many problems, such as hike in prices of food stuff beyond the reach of common man.

Furthermore, the overall picture of Nigeria prisons and inmates is one of unredeemed gloom and hopelessness, which affirms that the structure is a repulsive cauldron of human squalor and degradation. It is because of the psychological distress experienced by the inmates, that they come out of prison dejected, stigmatized traumatized and hopeless most, inmates on the first few days of their incarceration recorded high level psychological symptoms which are found to correlate with worries and cognitive stress. The terms "psychological distress and coping" in the study therefore, refers to the problems experienced by inmates and the public and how they cope with the problems. The historical background of research areas include Keffi, Nasarawa and Wamba prison, Keffi is a local government Area with chiefdoms of five, which consists of Keffi Emirate, Karu, Nyankpa, and Toni chiefdoms in the early 70s when it was under Plateau State Keffi was founded by a cattle rearer named Abdu Zanga, from Yan Tumaki in Katsina Emirate. Abdu Zanga used to visit Keffi Area to rear his cattle just like the Fulanis do in present day, moving from one state to another for greater pasture. In 1802 he decided to settle at the present site (Emir Palace) of the town, it was believed that Abdu Zanga met some Lions there of which he killed them and build his huts. He finally settled at the present site, his first part of settlement was Bagaji, where he stayed for nine months before he moved to Kofan Kaura near the present palace. He was later joined by other families and they built a village with a heavy stockade, around it. The called the stockade "Keffi meaning fenced settlement. Abdu Zanga gave birth to ten sons. Keffi prison is situated or located at the present Emir's palace, which is directly opposite the SSS office, by the side of area court,

some two building in between. Just like any other prison across the country, Keffi prisons have been in existence, from the time of pre-colonial era. Keffi prison was a house of one Makama Dogo who was just a friend to Magaji and not a son to the Emir, Makama was made to flee after killing a white man called Captain Maloney, after which his house became the present Keffi prison. The Keffi prison was known and called "Gidan Yari", was headed by the native authority, the chiefs and Emirs of which imprisonment was said to be punished for offenders. In 1908 – 1930, the Federal Government deemed it necessary to take over the prison formation. With this development on Alhaji Hussaini .A. Namadi became the first administrative officer from 1972 – 1976. This was followed by other officer from the rank of ASP, DSP, SUPT, CSP and ACP, respectively, took turn to take charge of the prison, from 1972 to date. The strength is 150 staff. The prison capacity is 130, as at this research work. There were one hundred and forty-two inmates; of both awaiting trial and convict inmates.

There are some observed problems in Nigeria prisons like:

- In prisons, the inmates look emaciated due to lack of qualitative and adequate food, that is the individual inmates ration is not untraditionally prepared which causes a lot of stress to the inmates not having freedom on his own.
- Unbathed bodies and shift buckets, kept overnight in cells causes a lot of psychological distress to them, hand a great source of stress is being derived etc.
- The spread of diseases if they are overcrowded etc.

The Purpose of this study is to identify psychological distress in the inmates, and coping strategies. More so, the objective of this study is to discuss in details and analyzed what is obtained from the literature, the psychological causes, consequences and the implication of psychological stress on inmates. It is also to let the prison officials/staffs know the implication of psychological distress on inmates and to find solution to the problems causing distress in people generally especially the inmates and to reduce stress to the bearest minimum. It is significant to let the prison staff and inmates/public know or create awareness about the implication of psychological distress and the effect of stress on individuals. The study will also help the prison officials to know the importance of machineries for coping. Individuals will be able to change their cognition towards stress especially when there is nothing the individual will do about it. The individual can accept the situation and then cope positively. Knowing what a stress is, the prison staff sometimes are stressors to inmates, by way of handling them. Therefore, every individual should learn to face stress positively.

STUDY SETTING

The sample is drawn from the total population of inmates from Keffi Prisons in Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The age ranges from 18 – 60 years of both male and female samples.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is a significant psychological distress among long term serving inmates than the short-term serving inmates.
2. Female inmates cope and adjust positively with stress than the male inmates.

Conceptual and Theoretical Overview of Prison

The concept of prison has been addressed through many perspectives, which include structural functional and social dimensions. For example, McCauley & Icon (1954) described a prison as a physical structure in a geographical location where a number of people living under highly specialized condition adjust to the alternatives presented to them, by the unique kind of social environment. Moreso, Sykes (1958), Goffman, (1961) and Okunola, (1986) conceived prison as where people are highly secluded from the rest of the world with entirely new order of control. The above definitions are seen limited toward an understanding that a prison is a physical environment and could be described, geographically or spatial. Other than the physical conception, other schools of thought are based on function, framework and label. From the functional perspective, a prison is perceived as a place to punish offenders, where criminals that are removed from the society are dumped to protect the society from further criminal activities of the offenders and a place to rehabilitate, and teach offenders to be law abiding and productive after the release. Prisons are also perceive as a total institution, from the perspective of framework. Okunola, (1986) and Goffman, (1961) defined the concept in this manner where people who are socially rejected in same or mentally retard are housed. Goffman, saw it as an institution where people housed and as restricted contact with outside world and stereotypical behavioural pattern where social mobility is also restricted. The social structure is an abstraction based on social relationship with which the society can be analyzed into three main levels of individuals, institutions and sub-system.

In applying this assumption to the prisons the prison system is seen as a functional structural whole with different parts. As such it implies that aspects of the prison life ways such as norm, values, and folkways form integral parts of the institutional system of form integral parts of the institutional system of social control, and other behavioural patterns. Similar to the structured – functionalist theory of social system is the Merton's social structure perspective. According to Merton's (1949) identified and distinguished the manifest and latent functions of institutions and cultural traits. This approach is an appropriate model in understanding the intended and unintended functions of the prison system. Prisonization, social control, regimented culture and seclusion are designed to produce positive results in the life of the individual prisoners upon release. In Nigerian contexts, the significance of sending offenders to the prisons are not yet met because the offenders one likely to be more hardened than they were, before imprisonment. Emeka, (2011). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is a theory of human motivation that attempts to account for the energy and direction of behavior. It is organismic theory which states that individuals do not passively react to the environment but rather continually explore and adapt their environment or surrounding. According to this theory there are three primary psychological needs: Autonomy, competence and relatedness. In summary these are feelings to choose one's own behavior interacting affectively in the environment and meaningfully connecting to others that fuel exploration and adoption of life. The earliest psychoanalytic interest in coping centered on its role in psychopathology as a characteristic style for managing stress or threat. This is in line with the Freudian theory of psychosexual stage of childhood development at which trauma occurs, the primary impulses and conflict of each particular stage, finally the child cognitive characteristics at each stage which shaped in the defensive style.

Lazarus, (1992) coping process depends on the particular person, the specific type of encounter in the short or long run, and the outcome modality being studied. A combined intra-and inter individual research design allows us to view coping in both its state and traits aspect. The theory of coping as a process emphasizes that there are at least two major functions of coping, problem – focused and emotion – focused. The function of problem – focused coping is to change the troubled person – environment relationship by acting on the environment or oneself.

Stress is associated with so many physical physiological, emotional and psychological problems, can be managed. It is in our best interest to develop techniques for reducing stress, psychologists refer to management strategies as coping which they consider some points as relaxation techniques social support technique and reappraising the situation.

1. (Zuercher white 1998) suggests that relaxation in stressful situations such as anxiety disorders which are done through progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing which are proven to be effective in reducing long term stress reactions. These include physical exercise on road walk or it can even be done by means of press up and down in your room. Jogging, table tennis, all these are active approach to cope with stress.
2. Social support is term used by psychologists to refer to the resources we receive from others or groups, often in the form of comfort, caring or help. Having a good, friend or loved ones to learn on during the time of stress really matters. It is suggested that social support can improve one's psychological (health it is the social support from the Christian) brothers and sisters given to the prison inmates that have helped them go a long way in serving their jail terms.
3. in reappraising the situation, in order to think of how to cope with stress, it is important to note that the origin of stress reaction is essentially psychological. In most cases, it is not the sudden life event or the daily habble that leads to the experience of stress, but it is our interpretation of the event that really matters.

We therefore say the stress management techniques therefore relay largely on cognitive reappraisal of any situation. The earliest theory of stress otherwise known as the cognitive appraisal was first used as a cognitive motivated related theory, to describe a way o understanding stress as an outcome or subject to balance of power which exists between environmental demands, constraints and resource and ability to person to manage them. If a prisoner can cognitively adapt, he or she will not suffer much stress while in prison. According to Canoon (1929). The body possesses an internal mechanism to maintain stable bodily functioning or equilibrium. As environment presents the organisation within various challenges, the body must respond to each new situation by adjusting various psychological systems to many strategies could be adopted in order to cope with stress at work. Scheier et al (1986) have shown that the tendency to be optimistic or pessimistic influence the way the person copes with stressful encounters. The structural – functionalist approach of the system theory for the study of human society and culture is utilized in explaining prison environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress is an adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or demands placed on them. As a result of this individuals react to it which is called strain. Stress is undoubtedly an important issue and at the same time dangerous problem that is faced by most people in the society or environment. Therefore it is not an exaggeration to claim that no matter how one look at human existence today, it is full of series of problems to be solved. Life however has its joy as it has its sorrows, we could have joy when what we need is readily available to use and feel sorrowful when the basic necessity of life is not there at our disposal. As a result, we continue throughout life attempting to find better ways of minimizing the disappointments and sorrows of life and then to maximizing the joy of living. It is in the view of maximizing the joy of living that young adults as researchers have shown; many that they go into crime in order to attain those things that bring joy to them.

Trends and Perspective of Prisoners Mental Assessment

Imprisonment as a form of punishment has developed over the last 200 years. One of the forerunners of prisoner reformers is John Howard (Luyt 1999). His aim was to provide prisoners with opportunities for personal reform. It is generally accepted that prisons have five major purposes, namely rehabilitation retribution deterrence incapacitation and just what has not been agreed upon is whether these objectives are actually met by imprisonment. Imprisonment is used for the development and healing of offenders with the aim of preparing them to return successfully. This is to say that punishment should ultimately reshape the offender's attitudes. The department of correctional services was to ensure that sentences were carried out, and to assist prisoners to return to society. Since prisons are also public institutions and the politics of the day must influence the management and administration of prisons and the way in which inmates are treated. It is important to examine all relevant historic events that influenced the contemporary correctional "frame of operation to the rehabilitation and assessment of offenders. According to Baillargeon (2010) in 1918 there was a large number of mentally ill people in custody, and a great body of evidence has shown high rates of psychiatric morbidity. About one in seven prisoners has a treatable mental illness. In a systematic review and meta-analysis of 62 surveys of 23,000 prisoners the pooled psychosis was around 4%, major depression, 10-12%, and personality disorder 40-70% etc.

General Review of Nigerian Prison System Different From Other World

Nigerian prisons are characterized with overcrowding, poor staff morale. Inadequate funding need for new rights for prisoners, right to food, right to clean environment, right to human dignity, need for other alternatives to imprisonment etc. Prisons have been established throughout Nigeria. The various classes are Maximum Security Prisons, Convict Medium Security Prison Districts, Prison Lock-ups, Open Prison, Borstal Institution and Prison farm Centres. The general philosophy of Nigerian prison service is that treatment and rehabilitation of offenders can be achieved through carefully designed and well articulated administrative, reformatory and rehabilitative programs aimed at inculcating discipline and respect for law, order and regard for dignity of honest labour. Nigerian prisons system has not been able to live up to its expected role in Nigeria. As such there should be a reformation in Nigerian prison system, reforming the prisoners to be better than what they were before. The Nigerian prison system was established in

accordance with three forms of panel legislature which operate along side each other in the country the panel code and the accompanying criminal procedure code cap 81 laws of the federation 1990 (CPC) the criminal code and the accompanying criminal procedure Act Cap 80 laws of the federation 1990 (CPA) and the sharia panel legislature in 12 Northern states which applies to Muslims. By its establishment philosophy, the Nigerian prison service is an institution meant to administer panel treatment to adult offenders. Emeka E. Obioha (challenges and reforms in the Nigeria prisons system 2011. Nigerians prisons are not privatized like in the United States. As earlier said imprisonment is a measure for punishment for the offenders. Jail is also a correctional measure for offenders like drug pushers sex industries etc. though both imprisonment and jail. In America jail is not a synonym for prison. In United States, jail and prisons are privatized and it has become business. There is a study growth of private, for profit operation of federal state and country correctional facilities private firms have become so much involved in financing and construction of new prisons and the renovation of existing ones. In American prison system information technology aids in reducing human error that occur when process a new inmates, for instance jails and prisons are using electronic imagining, swift finger print identification, as well as computer system that can names, personal data etc (Emilio C. Vano 20). Nigeria prisons are not privatized and they lack adequate information technology aids.

METHOD OF STUDY

In this study, male and female of prison inmates were used as they were randomly selected. The study involves knowing the level of stress between long term, short term male and female inmates of younger and older ages. All are drawn from Keffi prisons. The design is done irrespective of educational, tribe, culture, religious, age, gender and socio-economic status.

SAMPLE

The researcher used a simple random sampling technique that gives the respondents equal opportunity to each, member of the target population. So the sampling size is one hundred (100).

THE INSTRUMENT USED

The data for the study, were collected by the use of a questionnaire, it has fifteen items and was administered to one hundred respondents.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
18 – 34	37	43.0
35 – 60	49	57.0
Total	86	100

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
Males	60	60%
Females	40	40
Total	100	100

RELIGIOUS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
Christian	72	72
Islam	26	26
Others	2	2
Total	100	100%

MARITAL STATUS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Single	45
Married	37
Divorce/separate	18
Total	100

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
Civil/Public Servant	89	89
Applicant/Student	7	7
Farmers/Traders	4	4
Total	100	100

EDUCATIONAL TO DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
Literate	93	93
Illiterate	7	7
Total	100	100

TERM SERVING DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	No. of Inmates	%
Long term	50	50
Short term	50	50
Total	100	100

Hypothesis 1 – Using Chi-Square

Differences between short term and long term serving inmates on psychological distress Performance Index

Short term	50	Df	Cal X ²	Obs X ²	P
Long term	50	1	0.16	3.851	<.05
Total	100				

The calculated chi-square (X²) is 0.16 at 0.5, df = 1, observed chi-square is 3.841. This shows that there is no significant difference on psychological distress among long term serving inmates and short term serving inmates. Hence, the H₁ hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2 – Using chi-square

	Coping/adjustment			
		Positive	Negative	Total
Inmates	Males	55	5	60
	Females	38	2	40
Total				100

The calculated chi-square (X^2) is 4.17 at 0.5, $df = 1$, observed chi-square is 3.841. this shows there is significant difference in coping/adjustment between male and female inmates. Hence, H_1 is accepted.

Hypothesis

Males	60	d.f	Cal X^2	Obs X^2	P
Females	40	1	4.17	3.841	>.05
Total	100				

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

According to the result of findings, hypothesis on was rejected, reason that there is no significant difference between long and short term inmates. In, other word, both long and short term inmates experience psychological distress except on the level of it. The second hypothesis which stated that there will be significant differences between male and female in their coping and adjustment of psychological distress in prison. This is indicated with the calculated value which was 4.17 at 0.5, $df = 1$. In the process of research, it was revealed that because the inmates have social support from Christians that come into prison to preach to them and advised them on what is wrong or bad and pray for them. Sometimes these Christians give them gift such as Soaps, Cloths, Bibles etc. as such some do not feel the psychological distress. Psychological distress creates stress on inmates and there are coping strategies they need to adopt. Stress is something that can, never be eliminated in the environment. So it requires physiological, social, psychological and emotional stability of individuals. For one to cope effectively with stress, it depends on several factors, such as person’s personality profiles, adequate social support, nature of home environment, knowledge and understanding of activities in the environment, and relationship with others. Human right of prisoners in Nigeria can not be overemphasized though in prison, the prisoners have right to clean environment, human dignity, food, clothing, even to contact their families. There should not be any deprivation of basic amenities. The health and safety practices in the prisons are taken care of where there are clinics in some prisons in the country and in some areas there are hospitals. The prisoners are medically taken care of. If the case is serious, such prisoners are admitted, for careful observation.

The clinics and hospital have qualified doctors and nurses that treat them. The prisoners are counseled by the authorities to avoid any thing that will upset them. As stated in the coping strategies theories, the way out from this psychological distress is to apply adjustment method, by thinking positively about himself, as that is not the end of life, there is need for him to change. On the side of prison organization, they should realize that though they are offenders but still have every human rights, and they should be provided with conducive environment. Relaxation and recreation, where they can exercise themselves, by strolling down, engaging in sport etc. are necessary. Offenders who are up to 17 years are liable to be sentenced or imprisoned. Prisoners from the age of 40 years and above are to suffer more distress than the others. Conclusively, the prison officers should be given a lecture on stress, because when they know the danger and consequences of stress, they will try to avoid creating stress for the inmates. Though a prisoner is there for his or her punishment but prison workers should facilitate prison environment, ensuring adequate supply of water etc for the inmates, by so doing, it will go a long way to help them cope even better than before. Human right violation should

be avoided in all the prisons as such they should be given or provided with basic amenities.

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