

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history

Received: 30 May 2024

Revised: 4 September 2024

Accepted: 25 September 2024

Keywords:

Recidivism, Social Support, Inmates, Correctional centres and criminality.

ABSTRACT

Criminality is assuming a dangerous dimension in Nigeria leading to recidivism. Recidivism refers to the act of committing a crime again after having served a prison sentence. The prevailing poverty due to failing promises of ruling political parties and policies somersault aggravating affliction and promoting aggression has tremendously increased inmates in correctional centres and multiplied recidivism in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria. This study examined the influence of social support on inmate recidivism. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of all inmates in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria. The study sample consisted of 140 inmates selected using a proportionate sampling technique from three purportedly sampled correctional centres in the study area. Predictor of Inmates Recidivism in Correctional Centre (PIRCC) was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data were analysed using frequency count, simple percentage, chi-square and multiple regressions. The results showed the most committed offence by inmates were armed robbery and stealing/burglary (35.7%) in Southwestern Nigeria. The result also showed no significant influence of social support (Wald $x = .788$ p-value- $0.375 > 0.05$) on recidivism tendency among the inmates in Southwestern Nigeria. The study concluded that Social support did not influence recidivism among inmates in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Recidivism refers to the act of committing a crime again after having served a prison sentence. The inmate lifestyle is not a pleasant one to look forward to, yet many people prefer to breach the laws of society by committing crimes that will send them to the correctional centre. However, it is worrisome when persons who have gone through such unfathomable situations end up committing another crime after he/she has been released from the correctional institution for the first time. Having to spend more time in prison is a major deterrent. Thus, this is the case. The recidivism rate may be calculated as the percentage of ex-inmates rearrested for new correctional crime. Reoffending might signify that the offender repeats the same crime that landed him in jail the first time, or it can indicate that the offender committed a new crime after being released from prison. When discussing recidivism, it is important to consider a wide range of elements that span cultural, legal, and economic boundaries.

Recidivist inmates hurt society at large, as well as correctional institutions and the public at large; nevertheless, recidivism has the most detrimental effect on taxpayers since it is their money that finances Nigeria's criminal justice system. Economic and societal factors, lack of social support, insecurity, length of incarceration, severity of sentence, aspirations for public office, current lifestyle, and professional trajectory are just a few examples that may play a role in criminal recidivism. Numerous other factors, such as the offender's background experiences while in jail and their immediate and long-term environment after being released from prison, may have contributed to the offender's

recidivism. The vast majority of ex-offenders report that they were given little to no help in adjusting back to society after they were released from prison.

Recidivism, or recurrent criminal behaviour, is a serious problem, and this new knowledge has far-reaching implications. There may be several factors at play in the high rate of recidivism in Nigerian society, including but not limited to job insecurity, low pay, difficulties securing stable housing, inadequate programming for education and skill development in corrections, exposure to correctional elements after release, a lack of opportunities to reintegrate into society, and societal stigma. A major risk is posed by releasing inmates who cannot support themselves financially, mentally, physically, or socially and who lack the essential equipment (such as vocational tools, certifications, etc.) to find gainful jobs in the public or private sector. These inmates will likely commit other crimes and return to criminal crime again. According to Skeem and Peterson (2010), for instance, a lack of participation in educational and occupational pursuits, which are typically activities that benefit society, is a risk factor for recidivism.

Another contributor to Nigeria's high recidivism rate is society's reaction to jail. People with criminal records have a hard time (re)entering society because of the negative connotations associated with their labels. People in the outside world have a biased outlook on ex-inmates. Just to restate, the inmates at the correctional centre represent a wide range of ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds and also exhibit a wide range of behavioural and personality quirks. However, many inmates who are jailed would prefer to stay back than risk being freed and having to adapt to life outside of the prison. This is due to the convenience of staying within the prison rather than they desire to return to their home, they will prefer to commit another crime that would return them to the prison.

Although recidivism is an issue all around the globe, it appears more pervasive in correctional centres. According to Abrifor, Atere, and Muoghalu (2012), criminologists, sociologists, and researchers from other fields have begun to question the correctional centre's original purpose due to the high rate at which released inmates return to the facility within a few months after their release. This is because criminologists, sociologists, and academics from other fields have taken an interest in the high rate at which ex-inmates are readmitted to the correctional facility within a few months of their release.

Recidivism is a worldwide issue that has far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, governments, and economies. Tenibiaje (2013) identified situational, personal, interpersonal, family, structural, cultural, and economic elements as both societal and correctional centre characteristics that cause some persons to go into jail and, hence, predict their future re-entry into prison. To get significant work experience and fair compensation, only a minority of inmates are given the chance to work while incarcerated offenders will be able to find a safe place to stay until their release date, and it is hoped

that the correctional facility will also play a significant role in rehabilitating them into law-abiding members of society, easing their readjustment, and preventing them from returning to criminal activity. In response to these demands, several creative and cutting-edge approaches have been developed to transform the jail system and its inmates into productive members of society.

The Nigerian correctional system as a whole requires reform, as many ex-inmates struggle to readjust to society after their release due to the harsh circumstances in which they were held. Finding a new home and job, reconnecting with loved ones, and starting again are all examples of the difficulties they face. Recidivism is when a person engages in undesired behaviour after having been warned against or otherwise instructed not to engage in such behaviour in the future. It is not just about committing a crime; it's every time a person engages in behaviour they've been taught to stop doing or has encountered bad repercussions for doing. Recidivism is defined as a person's return to criminal behaviour after having been convicted of a crime in the past (Florida Department of Corrections, 2014).

Crime is not only limited to Nigeria; crime is rampant all over the world. In a study carried out by Durose, Cooper and Snyder (2005) in the United States of America, it was found that over 67.8% of the 404,638 prisoners released in 2005 were re-arrested within three years, while 76.6% were arrested within five years, while in Sweden, a 2-year reconviction rate among prisoners was 43% (Graunbol, Kielstrup, Muiluvuori, Tyni and Baldursson, 2010). Abrifor et al. (2012) argued that recidivism has become very high and a common phenomenon among Nigerian subjects, both male and female prisoners in Nigerian prison custody. In 2010, Abrifor et al. (2012) found out that the estimated prevalence of recidivism in Nigerian prisons was 52.4%. Some individuals who are struggling to make ends meet turn to illegal behaviour, which ultimately results in a sentence of confinement in a correctional facility. It may be difficult to get a job in Nigeria, and the government doesn't do much to make life easier by providing even the basics. As a consequence, some people commit crimes out of depression, anxiety about the future, and the pressure to succeed financially quickly. Crime rates are on the rise globally and in Nigeria in particular; examples include drug misuse, fighting, assault, abortion, child trafficking, exam malpractice, impersonation, murder, assault, robbery, burglary, and theft. These include drug use, sexual assault, robbery, money laundering, terrorism, cybercrime, hacking, bribery, highway robbery, election rigging, cultism, loitering, and other associated activities.

Recidivism has increased tremendously in Sub-Saharan Africa and has also become a major problem affecting society, governments, multinationals and humanitarian organisations the world over (Osayi 2013). Recidivism has devastating effects on everyone involved in the criminal justice system in Nigeria, including inmates, correctional institutions, and the population at large (especially taxpayers whose money funds the system). There is evidence that a person's pre- and post-correctional social centres have an impact on whether or not they would re-offend when they are released. Releasing

imprisoned inmates who are economically, psychologically, physically, and socially demoralised without proper follow-up programmes for stability and fundamental apparatus (such as vocational tools, certificates, etc.) that will allow them to become self-sufficient and secure meaningful employment in government establishments or the private sector is unacceptable. These people will likely commit other crimes and return to criminal crimes.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although numerous forms of intervention have been tried, the recidivism rate continues to rise (Igbo & Ugwuoke, 2003). Researchers in Nigeria have made hints that recidivism is on the rise and that male criminals are more likely to re-offend than their female counterparts (Igbo & Uguwoke, 2003; Soyombo, 2009; Ugwuoke, 2010; Tennibiaje, 2013; Osayi, 2013). Igbo and Ugwuoke 2003 argued that the deteriorating state of correctional institutions and the general public's negative view of ex-inmates are two of the main causes of the alarming increase in the recidivism rate. Ugwuoke stated that the system itself was to blame for the growth in crime since it facilitated the spread and interchange of criminal influences and ideas. Tennibiaje (2013) found that among jailed inmates in Ekiti State, in the Southwestern area of Nigeria, the rate of recidivism was highest for those with the lowest levels of educational attainment and the highest rates of peer group influence. Although there has been an increasing number of research dedicated to the correlation of recidivism, relatively little has been devoted to how psychological factors (self-esteem and personality traits) and sociological variables (social supports and peer pressure) can predict recidivism. Therefore, this study investigated how psychological factors (self-esteem and personality traits) and sociological variables (social support and peer pressure) can determine recidivism among Nigerian inmates.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of social support on inmate recidivism in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. identify types of offence commonly committed by inmates in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria;
2. examined the influence of social support on inmates' recidivism in Southwestern Nigeria.

4. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of social support on inmates' recidivism tendencies.

5. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The study investigated the influence of social support as a determinant of recidivism among inmates in correctional centres in Southwestern Nigeria. The population for the study comprised all inmates in Southwestern State correctional centres in Nigeria. There are six states in the Southwestern region of Nigeria, namely Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo. Of the Southwestern state correctional centres, six are located in Ogun State with 3146 inmates, five correctional centres in Ondo with 887 inmates, five correctional centres in Lagos with 7644 inmates, three correctional centres in Oyo with 1848 inmates, two correctional centres in Osun with 1084 inmates and only one correctional centre in Ekiti with 530 inmates as at April 2021. The inmates consisted of both male and female inmates within the age bracket 18-70. These populations also consist of returning inmates.

The sample for this study comprised 140 returning inmates who were selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Southwestern Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, which comprises six states, namely Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti, Osun and Ondo. From the six states, three states were selected using a simple random sampling technique and one correctional centre with the highest number of inmates was purposively selected for use from each of the selected states. The Proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 10% of returning inmates based on the total number of returning inmates in each of the correctional centres, and a total of 140 returning inmates were selected for use in the study.

6. Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of social support on inmates' recidivism tendencies.

To test this research hypothesis, social support was used as an independent variable, while the number of times of conviction (recidivism) as an ordinal variable was used as the dependent and subjected to ordinal logistic regression analysis. The result of the ordinal logistic regression is presented in Table 4.5

Table 4. 5. Parameter Estimates showing ordinal logistic regression of social support on inmates’ recidivism tendency.

	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold [CONVICTION = 1.00]	.626	.705	.788	1	.375	-.756	2.009
Location Social support	-.002	.018	.012	1	.913	-.038	.034

Summarily, conviction 1 is the influence of social support on inmates’ recidivism, and the result, as shown in Table 4.5, indicated that the social support received by inmates does not have a statistically significant effect on the recidivism tendency (p-value > 0.05)

To test this research hypothesis, the social supports were computed into a single measure and further categorised into low and high levels appropriately.

7. Findings

The following findings were made from the research:

- i. The most commonly committed offences by inmates are armed robbery and stealing/burglary in Southwestern Nigeria.
- ii. The prevalence of recidivism among inmates in Southwestern Nigeria is high.
- iii. There is no significant influence of social support on recidivism tendency among inmates.

8. Conclusion

The study closely examined psychosocial factors predicting recidivism among inmates in Southwestern Nigeria. Therefore, the finding of this study indicated that only the length of years in prison is the predicting factor that could predict recidivism tendency among inmates in Southwestern Nigeria.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- 1. The Federal Government should embrace good governance to reduce poverty and oppression among citizens to reduce criminality and recidivism
- 2. Social support should be improved towards the inmates to enhance sustainable welfare after leaving the correctional centres.

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