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FAMILY SUPPORT AND JAIL DURATION AS CORRELATES OF RECIDIVISM AMONG PRISON INMATES OF AGODI PRISON IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Re-offending is one of the major problems with ex-convicts and researches have been conducted to ascertain causes of re-offending among ex-offenders. Evidence is still needed on the influence of family support and jail duration on reoffending among ex-prison inmates in Nigeria. The sample for this study is 200 (Two hundred) respondents who were purposively selected in a cross-sectional survey among other inmates at Agodi prison. Results reveal that there is a significant inverse relationship between family support and criminal intent ($r = -.32, p < .01$), family support, family relationship quality and partner support jointly predicted criminal intent ($R^2 = 0.13, F(3,245) = 11.79, p < .01$). The results further reveal that there is a significant effect of length of sentence on criminal intent ($F(3,246) = 6.57, p < .001$), inmates with awaiting trial (short sentence) reported high criminal intent than awaiting trial. It was concluded that family support and jail duration influence re-offending among inmates and necessary recommendations were made.

Keywords: Inmates, re-offending, prison, jail duration and family support

INTRODUCTION

One major population vulnerable to criminal behaviour intent is ex-convicts because they are more likely to re-offend after they return to the community. Research reports have shown the effect of imprisonment on inmates over the past decades in the developed nations, with researchers having varying opinions (Picken, 2012). Family members depend primarily on each other, rather than on formal organizations to keep the tie going and fix members' problems (Bales & Mears, 2008). In all societies families involve in a process of role change and adaptability that can be called pitching in and helping out. Some relatives pitch in by assuming full or major responsibility for activities that the prisoner used to do. In some instances we have grandmothers, sisters, and aunts who assume the responsibilities of rearing children of single mothers and fathers in prison (Sexton, 2016). There are also spouses of men and women in prison

who take on new roles in financially supporting their children and new decisions making roles (Hairston, 1988). Besides, there are relatives who help by taking on new responsibilities that families acquire as a result of imprisonment of a member, e.g. negotiating with the prison system, serving as an emissary between the prisoner and his/her children and other relatives or arranging for and paying the costs of prison visits (Bobbitt & Nelson, 2004; Naser&Visher, 2006).

Remaining connected with family members by prisoners is the responsibility of all family members and it is a way to manage separation and maintenance of connections. Family members pay visit to their imprisoned members where they are held, have chat with them on phone, exchange cards and letters as a way of maintaining connection (Mears, Cochran, Siennick, & Bales, 2012). All these forms of contacts allow for continuation of sharing family experiences and participate in family rituals, e.g., birthday celebrations, religious observances, etc. and help to maintain emotional attachment. They also assure incarcerated parents that their wards have not forgotten them and also to the children that their parents love and care about them. At the same time these types of relationships allow prisoners to function in socially acceptable roles rather than as prison inmates (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Chikwe and Emi Maria(2016) view incarcerated people as in an unusual environmental enclosed world filled with stress, with little opportunities for decision making and socially isolating. Information to inmates is also essential as it helps to stabilize their initial seclusion and fear. Family support system is the most critical type of support that determines success for incarcerated individuals upon release. It refers to support efforts given by families to resolve psycho-social challenges of inmates (Rodríguez & Cohen, 2010).

Over the years, Nigerian prisons have been noted for avenue for human resources wastage because it allow for idleness among inmates (Obioha, 2011). As a result, length of time spent in the prison is view as a process of de-socialization which may not enhance the process of readjusted back into the society. Incarceration can harden up petty criminals while it affords the professional criminals the opportunity to learn new tricks and learn from mistakes. Although, Makarios, Steiner, and Travis (2010) disproved the assumption that Incarceration can harden up petty criminals while it affords the professional criminals the opportunity to learn new tricks and learn from mistakes, and suggested good outcome for reconvicts and juveniles. As everywhere else in society, family support is essential and a great deal in incarceration. Family support allows inmates to cope psychological and socially with their prison experience and at the same time reduces chances of reoffending for ex-inmates. According to Martinez & Abrams (2013) lack of social support after release from prison may lead to criminal behaviour intent if the inmates' experiences high level of distress and have nobody to look up to. Investigation on the effect of family support on ex offender is relatively under researched area in Nigeria. Stressful life events have effect on the individual and the family. It affects individuals' health and family roles. If very intense, they can lead to family crisis, thereby blocking and disabling the family system. Action taken to solve such situation will greatly depend on family support provided. Thus this study tries to verify the impact of family support and jail duration on re-offending behavior among prison inmates.

Hypotheses

The following hypothesized in the study:

1. Family support, family relationship quality and partner support will be significant positive correlates of criminal intent among prison inmates.
2. Family support, family relationship quality, and partner support will independently and jointly predict criminal intent among prison inmates.
3. Length of sentence will significantly influence criminal intent among prison inmates.

METHODS

Research design: This study was conducted using a cross sectional survey research. This is because the study is a survey research whereby no variable was manipulated.

Research setting: The study was conducted at the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS), Agodi Prison. This is a low grade security prison that houses low/medium criminals.

Research participants: The study was conducted at Agodi Prison in Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria and a sample of 200 inmates across sexes was purposively selected for the study.

Research instruments

The main instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire booklet which was divided into three sections. Demographic variables measured comprised of age, sex, education qualification, income, marital status and occupation.

Criminal intent was measured with the criminal intent questionnaire developed by Dunkel and Decker (2010). The questionnaire measures the probability that the inmates will engage in crime after their release from custody. The questions were score on a 5-point likert scale response formats ranged from 1 = Highly unlikely to 5 = Highly likely).

Family Support Scale: Family support was measured using Family support scale adapted from Visser, La vigne and Travis (2004) as a general assessment tool to measure the social support received from family during incarceration. The scale captures family support, quality of family relationship, partner support during incarceration. All the items were scored on a 4 point likert scale ranged from 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The authors reported strong reliabilities for the sub scales in their study. (Family support (.84 alpha) quality of family relationship (.97 alpha), partner support (positive = .92 alpha; negative .78 alpha).

Procedure

The researcher sought the necessary approval from the prison commandant through formal request. The purposive sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents at social welfare unit. The researcher first obtained a verbal consent from the respondents after explaining to the respondents the nature of the research and that the study was strictly for research purpose only. The respondents were assured that the information would be treated confidentially.

Data analysis

The hypotheses stated in the study were three and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Regressions and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were statistical tools used.

RESULTS

This section deals with data analysis and interpretation of result.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

In terms of gender 75 (37.5%) were female and 125 (62.5%) were male. The frequency of participants by age shows that 9 (4.5%) were within the age range of 19-21 years, 180 (90.5%) were within the age range of 22-50 years, and 11 (5.5%) were within the age range of 51-70 years. Also, 176 (88.0%) were secondary school leavers, 39 (4.5%) were primary school leavers, while 15 (7.5%) have tertiary education. Also, in terms of ethnicity 14 (7.0%) were Hausas, 161 (80.5%) Yoruba, 16 (8.0%) Igbo, and 9 (4.5%) were the rest.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one which stated that family support, family relationship quality and partner support will be significant positive correlates of criminal intent among inmates in Agodi prison. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of family support, family relationship quality, partner support and criminal intent

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Criminal intent	41.09	14.18	-			
2. Family support	13.79	4.25	-.32**	-		
3. Family relationship	38.28	11.19	-.08	.46**	-	
4. partner support	36.65	9.00	-.06	.53**	.57**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

The results showed that there was significant inverse relationship between family support and criminal intent ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$) demonstrating that increase in family support significantly relate to decrease in criminal intent. There was no significant relationship between family relationship quality and criminal intent ($r = -.08$, $p > .01$). There was no significant relationship between partner support and criminal intent ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$). The results indicate that increased or decreased family relationship quality and partner support did not significantly relate to increase or decrease in criminal intent. Hypothesis one is thus accepted.

Hypothesis two which stated that family support, family relationship quality, and partner support will independently and jointly predict criminal intent was tested using multiple regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Influence of inmates' family support, family relationship quality, and partner support on criminal intent

Predictors	B	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
Family support	-.417	-5.767	<.01				
Family relationship quality	.015	.207	> .05	0.36	0.13	11.79	< .01
Partner support	.153	1.948	> .05				

The result revealed that respondents' family support, family relationship quality and partner support jointly predicted criminal intent ($R^2 = 0.13$, $F(3,245) = 11.79$, $p < .01$). When combined the respondents' family support, family relationship quality and partner support accounted for 13% of the change observed in the self-report of criminal intent among inmates in Agodi prison. This revealed that the collective presence of family support, family relationship quality and partner support variables have significant influence on criminal intent. The result also revealed that family support ($\beta = -.42$, $p < .01$) is significant independent predictor of criminal intent. While family relationship quality ($\beta = .02$, $p > .05$) and partner support ($\beta = .15$, $p > .05$) have no significant independent influence on criminal intent of inmates in Agodi prison. The result demonstrated that family support is significant predictor of criminal intent meaning that increase in family support reduces criminal intent. The hypothesis was partially supported.

Hypothesis three which stated that length of sentence will significantly influence criminal intent was analyzed using one way ANOVA and the summary of the result presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Summary of one-way ANOVA showing the influence of inmates' length of sentence on criminal intent

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3711.339	3	1237.113	6.568	
Within Groups	46334.725	246	188.353		<.001
Total	50046.064	249			

The results revealed that there was significant effect of length of sentence on criminal intent ($F(3,246) = 6.57$, $p < .001$), inmates with awaiting trial (short sentence) reported high criminal intent than awaiting trial (long sentence). The result indicates that criminal intent increased with decrease in length of service however, declined between convicted (short sentences) and convicted (long sentence).

Table 4: Descriptive statistics showing mean difference in criminal intent based on length of sentence

Length of sentence	N	Mean	S.D	<i>LSD POST HOC ANALYSIS</i>			
				1	2	3	4
Awaiting trial (short sentence)	139	42.76	15.32		.59	7.66	12.85**
Awaiting trial (long sentence)	78	42.17	10.94				
Convicted (short sentence)	10	35.10	5.97				
Convicted (long sentence)	23	29.91	14.19				
Total	250	41.09	14.18				

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results showed descriptive analysis and post hoc analysis revealed that inmates with awaiting trial (short sentence) (Mean = 42.76) and awaiting trial (long sentence) (Mean = 42.16) reported higher criminal intent than inmates who are Convicted with short sentence and convicted with long sentence.

DISCUSSION

Family support, family relationship quality and partner support relationship with criminal reoffending among inmates in Agodi prison was confirmed. There was significant inverse relationship between family support and criminal reoffending demonstrating that increase in family support significantly relates to decrease in criminal reoffending. Increased or decreased family relationship quality and partner support did not significantly relate to increase or decrease in criminal reoffending. This findings support the work of McKay et al. (2016) who found that families provided critical material (i.e., food, housing, and money) and emotional support, which was related to their post-release success in remaining drug-free and finding employment and stability. The findings also support Bobbitt and Nelson (2004) who also demonstrated the influence of parents, siblings, and other relatives of the offender, in reducing offending.

The second hypothesis was also confirmed that family support, family relationship quality, and partner support independently and jointly predict criminal reoffending. The result demonstrated that family support; family relationship quality and partner support predicted criminal reoffending. Family support is significant independent predictor of criminal reoffending. While family relationship quality and partner support have no significant independent influence on criminal reoffending of inmate in Agodi prison. Dowden et al. (2003) found that family support variable is the strongest predictors of female offenders' Success and Slaughter (1999) found family relationships to have a significant influence on relapse prevention among parolees which is also in line with host of studies by Bobbitt and Nelson (2004); Naser and Visher (2006). Visher and Courtney (2006) in their findings also identified family support as the most important factor that kept ex- convict from returning to prison.

The results also revealed that there was a significant effect of length of sentence on criminal reoffending. This means that criminal reoffending reduces with increasing duration of incarceration. This finding is in contrast to Cochran et al. (2014) who found

that there was no substantial association between time served and the recidivism rates, and Chen and Shapiro (2007) who submitted that increased length of time served did not reduce recidivism. The study also corroborate the finding of Jason, and Kyleigh (2016) who found that on parole offenders with the longest time served generally had higher recidivism rates than offenders with the shortest time served. After five years of follow up, the researchers concluded that neither prison nor probation was a very good means of reducing recidivism. The problem of reoffending among ex offender continue to be a subject of discussion but it is evidently clear in this study that social support enjoy by ex-convict is very instrumental in preventing reoffending. Family members give emotional and material support to its members and this type of support can significantly reduce possibility of reoffending as it take care of some needs in the life of offenders whose reason for offending may be as a result of lack of these needs. There is need for families whose one of its members have served jail term to rally round such member and give necessary support needed by such members so as to prevent recidivism such members.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights social factors associated with criminal reoffending among prison inmates. The role of length of prison sentence was significant in criminal reoffending. However, this study demonstrated the significant contribution of social support as predictors of criminal reoffending. Based on this, it was concluded that the family support play significant role in preventing criminal reoffending among prison inmates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis of the study, the following recommendations were made: Prison officers especially social workers, as a matter of urgency should find a means of reaching family members of inmates with the aim of counseling them on the benefit of providing adequate social support for their members in prison.' Prison system must continuously assess the situational factors that mediate inmate's institutional climate (i.e., inmate turnover) and have potentially negative impact on prisoner's adjustment and possibly a long term effect on recidivism. It is also important for prison officers to conduct periodical assessment of prisoners (e.g., every six months or yearly) on a wide variety of dynamic risk factors using valid risk assessment tools. This type of clinical information gathering will provide experts with a much more sensitive and precise estimate of the effects of prison conditions on criminal reoffending. Only then will prison officers will be able to empirically determine offenders that are prone to recidivating upon release. Inmates should be realistically introduced to useful trades that are geared towards occupational reality of the world outside prison; so that they could better their live after release from prison.

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