

Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)

Volume 3 (1) 31 – 39, January 2022 | ISSN: 2720-9946(Online)ISSN: 2723-3626 (Print)

The article is published with Open Access at: <http://e-journal.unipma.ac.id/index.php/SHE>

FAMILY SUPPORT, DURATION OF INCARCERATION AND INMATES' INTENT TO RETURN TO CRIME IN AGODI PRISON, IBADAN, NIGERIA

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Abstract: Criminal intent is a major precursor of reoffending behaviour and one of the big issues for ex- convicts and investigations have been undertaken to determine reasons of re-offending within imprisoned population. Evidence is still needed on the influence of family support and incarceration duration on intent to reoffending among inmates in Nigeria. Prison inmates (291) were selected for a cross-sectional survey in the Agodi prison. Results revealed a significant inverse relationship among family and partner support and criminal intent behavior. Family and partner support predicted criminal intent. Short duration of stay (less than 2 years) in the prison among inmates awaiting trial was associated with higher criminal intent. It was concluded that low family/partner support and shorter stay in prison were possible precursor of reoffending among inmates in Agodi prisons. Persistent assessment of institutional environment risk for re-offending among inmates using valid risk assessments tools was recommended.

Keywords: Criminal Intent, Family Support, Partner Support, Re-offending, Length of stay in prison.

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Citation: Ishola, A.A. (2022). Family support, duration of incarceration and inmates' intent to return to crime in Agodi Prison, Ibadan, Nigeria. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 3(1), 31 – 39. DOI: 10.25273/she.v3i1.11928



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INTRODUCTION

According to criminological theory, the value of family support is long-standing (McCarthy & Adams, 2018). Social support is a critical tool for reducing offending because for individuals with beneficial social associations, the risk of breaking rules is lower (McCarthy & Adams, 2018). Inmates are one significant population prone to high motivation for criminal conduct in Nigeria before and after release (Abrifor, 2019). In Nigeria, close to one-third of ex-offenders often reoffend due to a myriad of factors, among which lack of social support has been significant in Nigeria (Abrifor, 2019; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015). Numerous authors (Abrifor, 2019; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015; Uchenna, Anele & Iwarimie-Jaja, 2017) have argued that the recurrence of criminal involvement among Nigerian ex-convicts typically includes paucity of rehabilitation, untimely release from jail before constructive rehabilitation, severe inhumane treatment, and harmful environments that do not adequately prepare people for resettlement in their community, insufficient support for reintegration when released from jail, and a positive attitude towards crime, among others, promote recidivism (Abrifor, 2019; Uchenna, Anele & Jaja, 2017).

Incarceration is the commonest punishment and widely acknowledged norm or conventional solution to criminal behavior, whether probable or continuing criminal conduct (Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015). People are imprisoned for varying reasons, violations, and offenses, and the length of the incarceration often depends on the sheer magnitude of the offence committed and the criminal justice system of such a society. In a country where justice is frequently denied (Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015),

Prisoners are undergoing inhumane treatment to which both convicted and awaiting trial inmates are exposed. Many prisoners have begun serving prison terms while awaiting trial (Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015). Even the condition of the awaiting trials appears to be more pathetic as they

have to live in crowded cells and receive less institutional support due to the slow process of the criminal justice system delivering justice (Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015; Uchenna et al., 2017). Chikwe and Emi Maria (2016) described prisoners as individuals in circumstances that are environmentally unusual: an isolated world that is high in stress, low in decision-making opportunities, and isolated socially. Insiders also need information to stabilise this initial confinement and fear. The effects of prison on both family members and prisoners are quite substantial. Financial burden, mental and emotional trauma, and stigmatisation impact family members (Aborisade & Balogun, 2016; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015; Uchenna et al., 2017). During incarceration, these experiences may leave the inmates with social support or have it withdrawn due to social cost (stigma) and financial cost (Aborisade & Balogun, 2016; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015).

Family support is the most influential type of support and is a major factor for prisoners' success after their release from incarceration. Family support refers to support efforts given by families to tackle the psycho-social problems of inmates. Family members generally rely on one another rather than formal agencies to maintain family connections and address family members' concerns (Bales & Mears, 2008).

Families are involved in a process of change in roles and adaptability that is considered "participating in and helping out" for prison inmates. While taking full or substantial liability for something that the inmate used to do, certain family activities include standing in as surrogate parents or decision makers for inmates. sources such as the grandmothers, sisters, and aunts who assume responsibility for the rearing of children for single parents in prison custody. They take on new roles in raising their children financially and making decisions (Sexton, 2016). Some family members are assisting with additional roles. For example, they communicated with prison staff, acted as emissaries

between inmates and children or other family members, and planned and bore the cost of prison visits. (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2016; Datchi, Barretti & Thompson, 2016).

Communication between inmates and their relatives is the most clear and obvious method for handling isolation and preserving relations between relatives and offenders. As a form of social support, families frequently visit their incarcerated members in prison, speak to them by phone, and share cards and letters to stay connected (Mears, Cochran, Siennick, & Bales, 2012). These contacts enable adults, parents, and children to share experiences of "being a family" and to participate in rituals for the family, like birthdays, worship celebrations, etc. It ensures that the incarcerated parents have not forgotten about their children and that the children respect and care for their parents. They allow prisoners to see and participate in socially acceptable roles instead of being regarded as prison figures and institutionalised clients (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Shobola and Ajeigbe, (2015) identified that there is a significant high level of family support (visitation, communication, and financial support), especially during arrest, persecution, and sentencing, but that it may significantly decline after sentencing (Aborisade & Balogun, 2016). Social support during these periods has been demonstrated to relieve stress, anxiety and improve psychological wellbeing (Balogun, 2014; Mefoh et al., 2016). It is difficult to really emphasize the effect of support from family on the beneficiary. This means recognition, gratitude, a profound sense of affection, and a sense of belonging to others. This may be psychologically empowering for the individual who has access to it (Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015).

Concurrent and post-release views of relationship success and aspirations for future support have been related to support while in incarceration (calls, messages, and visits) (McCarthy & Adams, 2018; Hickert, Palmen, Dirkzwager & Nieuwebeerta, 2019). Some studies have

established that familial social support can mitigate re-offending (Hickert et al., 2019; Fahmy & Wallace, 2019; McCarthy & Adams, 2018). According to Rodriguez and Cohen (2010), family support was a major factor for incarcerated individuals regarding their success upon release.

Current study

Nigerian prisons are a true outlet for the misuse of human capital in society due to the fact that they allow idleness and waste of time by prisoners (Obioha, 2011). Based on this, the length of time spent in prison is seen as a process of de-socialization, and thus individuals may find it difficult to be readjusted back into society. Being in prison is believed to afford petty criminals the opportunity to harden up, while it affords professional criminals the opportunity to learn new tricks and learn from mistakes. However, several studies have come to disprove this assumption, as many studies have suggested good outcomes for reconvicts and juveniles (Makarios, Steiner, & Travis, 2010). These two assumptions have not been empirically investigated, while efforts on re-offending have largely focused on juveniles. As everywhere else in society, family support matters a great deal in prison.

Family support enables inmates to cope psychologically with their prison experience while it provides support that prevents inmates from re-offending. According to Martinez and Abrams (2013), a lack of social support after release from prison may lead to criminal behaviour intent if the inmate experiences a high level of distress and has nobody to look up to. In the current research, the literature reviewed revealed that investigation into the attenuating effect of family support on ex-offenders is relatively under researched in Nigeria (Abifor, 2019).

Further, incarceration is a stressful life event that profoundly affects individuals' relationships and family roles.

It is often very intense, leading to family crisis, thereby blocking and disabling the family system (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015). Individuals' experience with criminal justice and the action taken to solve such a situation greatly depends on the family support provided. Concurrently, the support provided is believed to further improve post-incarceration rehabilitation, readjustment, and life after prison (Martinez & Abrams, 2013; Shobola & Ajeigbe, 2015). However, in Nigeria, less is known about the profound effect of familial social support on criminal intent on return to society among the prison inmate population. Thus, this study tries to verify the impact of the role of family social support time spent in prison as a precursor of re-offending behaviour among prison inmates. Family support, family relationship quality, and partner support were hypothesised to be significant inverse correlates of criminality among Agodi prison inmates. Secondly, the role of family support, family relationship quality, and partner support were hypothesised to be predictors of criminal intent among inmates of Agodi prisons. Lastly, the differences in criminal intent based on the time spent in prison among inmates of Agodi prisons were also examined.

METHODS

Participants

This study is correlational design in nature. The study was carried out in Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS), Agodi Prison yard, located in Agodi - gate, Ibadan, Oyo state. It is a medium security prison that houses various degree of criminals with the capacity to lock up three hundred and ninety (390) inmates. However, at the time of this research the prison is locking one thousand and sixty-five inmates (1195). Yamane (1965) samples size estimation was estimated at 291 for the current study.

Two hundred and ninety-one convicted and awaiting trials inmates were

sampled using systematic sampling (every 3rd inmate on the nominal prison roll call till the sample size was achieved). Mentally ill, lifers and criminal on death row were excluded. The sampled inmates were majorly males (85.57%) and 14.43% were females. The age ranged from 18-78 years (Mean = 27.89 (S.D = 5.26), majority (n = 241, 82.81%) had secondary school education and others had primary school (5.15%) or tertiary (7.56%) education. In terms of ethnicity grouping, the inmates include majority Yoruba (73.88%); Hausa/Fulani (16.83%), Igbos (6.19%) and other minority tribes (3.1%). Offense committed include; kidnapping (8.93%), terrorism related offenses (5.84%), rape/sexual assault (14.43%), theft/stealing (12.02%), burglary (10.65%), vandalization (9.27), armed robbery (31.52%), physical assault (4.12%) and fraud related offenses (3.22%).

Research instruments

Criminal intent was measured using items from the criminal intent scale developed by Dunkel, Mathes and Beaver (2013). The scale measures the probability that the inmates will engage in crime after their release from custody. The items were score on a 5-point response format ranged from 1 = Highly unlikely to 5 = Highly likely. Sample items include: "Fight in a public place" and "commit burglary when in need of cash." Dunkel, Mathes and Beaver (2013) reported a reliability was 0.94 alpha for the scale while in the current study the scale reliability was $\alpha = 0.96$ alpha. Total sum of the scores on the 21 items made up the composite index of criminal intent. Some of the items were adapted to make it more culturally relevant such as \$50 was converted to the local currency at the current rate at 500 Naira to 1 Dollar (=N= 25,000). The amount of illegal marijuana possession was quantified as more than 1 wraps (30 grams). Item included include chance of; being involve with violent robbery; being involved in cultic gang related attacks; renewed contact with criminal gangs. A pilot study was conducted

with 100 awaiting trial inmates in not included in the study (males = 90% and females = 10%; age (ranged = 19-50years (Mage = 24.14 (S.D = 5.12) years) and a reliability of 0.97 Cronbach alpha, split-half reliability of 0.98 spearman brown coefficient were obtained.

Family support and quality of partners' relationship were measured using items from the family social support and quality of partners relationship scale developed by Visher, La Vigne and Travis (2004). The multi-dimensional scale measures the social support received from family members and important others, its quality, partner support during incarceration. The Visher et al. (2004) scale is made up of family support (Sample items: *Felt close to your family; Wanted your family to be involved in your life*), quality of family relationship (Sample items: *There is someone in your family you could count on to listen to you when you need to talk; There is someone to talk to about yourself or your problem*) and partner support during incarceration (Sample items: *You could turn to your(partner) for advice about problems; You could count on your (partner) to help you if a family member close to you died*). All the items were scored on 5-point likert scale ranged from 5 = Strongly agree to 1 = Strongly disagree. Composite index of variable was form from the addition of items on each scale (family support = 5 items, quality of family relationship and partner support) Items on each scale added to form the aggregate index of family support. Visher et al. (2004) reported strong reliabilities for the subscales in their study (Family support (.84 alpha) quality of family relationship (0.97 alpha), partner support (positive = .92 alpha; negative .78 alpha). However, in the current study the following reliability coefficients alpha were reported (Family support $\alpha = .87$; quality of family relationship $\alpha = 0.91$, partner support (positive $\alpha = .89$); negative $\alpha = .85$).

Time spent in the prison among convicted was captured as the number years being incarcerated in the prison (time awaiting trial + number of years

served from the sentence) as a continuous score in months classified in to short term (less than 2 years) and long term (2 years or more). For the awaiting trials, since no judgment have been delivered; thus, the number of years spent in the prison custody awaiting trial in months was recorded as length of stay in the prisons. This was also classified in to short term (less than 2 years) and long term (2 years or more).

Procedure

The researcher sought the necessary approval from the prison comptroller through formal request. Ethical approval was provided by the Nigerian correctional Service ethical review board. The purposive sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents at social welfare unit. The researcher first obtained an informed 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.

Method of Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to describe the demographic characteristics. The hypotheses stated in the study were three and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Regressions and One-way ANOVA were used to test them at $p \leq 0.05$ of significance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis was stated that family support, family relationship quality and partner support will be significant positive correlates of criminal intent among inmates in Agodi prison was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation in Table 1.

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	43.22	6.21	-			
2. Family support	13.57	4.25	-.43**	-		
3. Family relationship	38.46	5.79	-.07	.51**	-	
4. Partner support	36.72	9.00	-.17*	.55**	.60**	-

**p<0.01, *p<0.05

The results in Table 1 show that there was significant inverse relationship between family support and criminal intent ($r(289) = -.32, p<.01$) demonstrating that increase in family support significantly relate to decrease in criminal intent. There was also a significant relationship between partner support and criminal intent ($r(289) = -.13, p<.05$) demonstrating that increase in partner support significantly relate to decrease in criminal intent. There was no significant relationship between family relationship quality and criminal intent ($r = -.07, p>.05$). The results indicate that increased or decreased family relationship quality 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 role of inmates' family support, family relationship quality, and partner support as predictors of criminal intent.

	R	R ²	F	P
	0.40	0.16	13.58	.000

	β	t	P
Family support	-.48	-5.99	.000
Family relationship quality	.04	.43	.157
Partner support	.18	2.16	.028

The result in Table 2, revealed that respondents' family support, family

relationship quality and partner support jointly predicted criminal intent ($R^2 = 0.16, F(3,288) = 13.58, p < .01$). When combined the respondents' family support, family relationship quality and partner support accounted for 16% of variance observed in the reported criminal intent among inmates in Agodi prison. The result also revealed that family support ($\beta = -.48, p<.01$) and partner support ($\beta = .18, p<.05$) were significant independent predictors of criminal intent. While family relationship quality ($\beta = .02, p>.05$) did not significantly predict criminal intent. The result demonstrated that decrease in partner and family support were associated with increasing criminal intent. The hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis three stated that criminal intent will significantly differ based on the time spent in prison was analyzed using one way ANOVA and the summary of the result presented in Table 3 & 4.

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

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3711.34	3	1237.11	6.57	.000
Within Groups	46334.73	286	188.35		
Total	50046.06	289			

The result in Table 3 reveals that there was significant effect of length of sentence on criminal intent ($F(3,286) = 6.57, p<.001$).The result indicates that criminal intent increased with decrease in length of service however, declined between convicted (short terms) and convicted (long term).

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

Length of sentence	N	Mean	S.D	LSD POST HOC ANALYSIS			
				1	2	3	4
Awaiting trial (short term)	152	43.42	7.89	.59	7.6*	12.8**	
Awaiting trial (long term)	65	43.23	9.46		-	6.9*	12.4**
Convicted (short term)	43	35.10	5.97			-	7.9**
Convicted (long term)	31	28.89	6.29				
Total	291	42.19	7.59				

Table 4 shows descriptive analysis and post hoc analysis revealed that inmates with awaiting trial (short term) ($M= 43.42$) and awaiting trial (long term) ($M= 43.23$) reported higher criminal intent than inmates who are convicted with short term and convicted with long term.

Discussion

Family and partner support significant relationship with criminal intent among inmates in Agodi prison were supported in the current findings. Empathic support from family members and partners significantly relates to decrease intent to commit crime after release. Increased or decreased family relationship quality did not significantly relate to increase or decrease in criminal reoffending. This findings support the work of McKay, Comfort, Lindquist, & Bir (2016) who noticed that families received vital resources (i.e. food, lodging and money) and emotional help contributed to their productive post-release phase in the quest for job opportunities 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 is significant predictor of criminal intent. While family relationship quality and partner support have no significant independent influence on criminal reoffending of inmate in Agodi prison. Dowden, Antonowicz and Andrews (2003) found that the component of family support is the key indicator of the performance of female offenders after release and Slaght (1999) showed that family ties had an significant effect on parolees progress. This is also in line with host of studies by Bobbit & Nelson, 2004; Naser & 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 result of hypothesis three reveals that there is significantly influence of length of stay on criminal reoffending. Shorter stay while awaiting trial were linked to increased criminal intent. These findings contrast Cochran, Mears and Bales (2014), who found that the time served and recurrence rates were not significantly related, and Chen & Shapiro (2007), which argued that the longer prison service do not reduce recurrence. The research further corroborates the findings of Jason and Kyleigh (2016), which observed that the risk of relapse among the longest serving parole inmates is significantly greater than the shorter serving probation prisoners. The researchers observed after five years of follow-up that neither jail nor court is an outstanding way to mitigate recurrence. 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 takes 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. such members so as to prevent recidivism such members.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights social factors associated with criminal intent among prison inmates. The role of length of stay in prison was significant in criminal reoffending. However, this study demonstrated the significant contribution of partner and family support as predictors of criminal/reoffending intent. Based on this, it was concluded that the family and partner support play was associated with reduced intent to go back to crime among

prison inmates. Based on the findings and analysis of the study, several recommendations were made. Prison officers especially psychologists and 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. The correctional or penal system should persistently assess the situational factors that intercede in prisoners' institutional environment (i.e inmates re-offending) and contrarily affect prisoners adjustment and perhaps a drawn out impact on recidivism. It is additionally significant for jail officials to direct periodical evaluation of prisoners (e.g at regular intervals or yearly) on a wide assortment of dynamic risk factors utilizing valid risk assessment tools. These sort of clinical data will give professionals a significantly more sensitive and the exact gauge of the impacts of prisons conditions on criminal reoffending. These allows correctional and forensic experts to experimentally confirm the motives for those inclined to recidivating upon discharge. Inmates ought to be sensibly acquainted with valuable exchanges that are equipped towards word related truth of the world external jail; so they could better their lives after discharge from prison.

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