

Instituting Helping Services and Their Couriers in Nigeria Prisons

Tenibiaje Dele Joseph and Adegoroye Biodun-Smith

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
University of Education, Nigeria

Abstract: This study reports an empirical data on the personality profile and the accompanying in-depth key information interview on the living experiences of 406 males and 98 female convicted inmates of 10 randomly selected of the 231 prisons in Nigeria. Data revealed a notable deviation from the United Nations minimum expectations of treatment of offenders. The study thus agreed with the other advocates of prison environment conditions reforms and observance of human rights therein that there is a wide room for improvements as these prisons a more of training and recruitment centres for crime commission among the inmates than the character remediation and personality reformatory centre it was designed to be. Most times they serve to harden the first time criminals. This study thus views it essential in the wake of the reforms that the present democratically elected government is undertaking in economy as well as social life of the people, not to leave the prisons out. This is in especially the area of physical structures and accommodation of the inmates and more importantly the addition of professional help givers to the list of staff members and the provision of special time for the inmates to receive the spectrum of psychological help that are focused towards the modern day essence of imprisonment.

Key words: Personality profile, convicted inmates, prisons, physical structures, accommodation, professional helpers, extroversion, neuroticism, psychoticism

INTRODUCTION

Jail terms and the subsequent imprisonment of the convicts are measures that all human societies adopt to sanction, punish, deter, modify, control and reform anti-social behaviours and criminal activities. Prison for this, is an essential part of all societies and especially in the modern days that crimes had increased in spectrum, dimensions and shade as well as their perpetrators.

The United Nations Assembly in living up to her responsibility of guaranteeing the safety of all her citizens as well as ensuring the rights of all those who offend, provided for certain minimum conditions and extent of deprivations due as punishment for the offenders. Essentially they have to be incarcerated for some length of time but while in such confinement, that is, as inmates in the prisons, they for example need to have balanced diets and regular feeding patterns, minimum comfortable clothing and living conditions, access to information, periodic access to visitations from family members, respectable treatments from the prison officials, access to productive activities and helping programmes that would aid adjustment and acquisition of sustainable skills after the expiration of the jail term. Also is the extent of labour that may be involved in whether they are prisoners by law or by war. This measure of minimum comforts and respect for human dignity for prison inmates, whatsoever be the nature of their offenses not have been but for the experiences of prisoners at concentration camps during the Nazi holocaust of the second world-war survivors of which have to contend with their sanity and a few who

have strong make-ups and having the wherewithal having to agitate. Further, UN (1984) emphasizes on standard minimum rules for prisoners the Standard Minimum Rules states that sustained efforts should be made to minimize any differences between prison life and life at liberty and that the prisons authorities in the different member nations should take all necessary measures to ensure prisoners' gradual return to life in the society (United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of Prisoners, Resolution 663 CI (XXIV) of 31st July 1957). The fore, going clearly justifies the reason why the spectrum of professional helpers (Medical Doctors, Psychiatrists, Sociologists, Counsellors, Teachers and Trade Instructors) as well as the services they peddle (maintaining the physical health condition, developing, having and keeping a sound mind as well as keeping hope alive) are recommended as appropriate and needful for the people to man the different positions of the Warders, Guards and Administrators of the Prisons. The roles and duties should embrace writing, administering, monitoring and managing the day-to-day activities in the prisons (Box, 1987).

However, Malumfashi (1997) noted and highlighted several deviations that the Nigerian prisons make from the standard. His description describes a condition that is perfectly the opposite of the expected by the UN standards and to which Nigeria is a signatory thereby making him aptly describe them as institutions for dehumanization. Confirming these are the daily reports of the news prints, periodicals and tabloids on these prison yards (The Tribune, 3rd August, 1996; The Guardian 14th Nov. 1998; The Guardian, 16th September, 1998).

Television news coverage of the visits of both the Chief Justice of the Federation and the states at especially National day celebrations where prerogative of mercy is usually extended to long serving inmates yearly remind Nigerians and confirm the gory state and the less than human conditions that inmates live in and under.

These reports speak of the buildings having been in existence before the colonial days of country and having become dilapidated and lacking necessary conveniences, poor and under feeding, overcrowding (substantial percentage, over 60% are still awaiting trials), outbreak of epidemics, frequent and untimely death of inmates and various behaviour deficits among the inmates, for example, practice of sodomy or homosexuality, spiritism, bullying, cheating and extortion of the less privileged by the older and stronger inmates etc. (Adegoke, 1990; Jarma, 2002; Malumfashi, 1997; Tenibiaje, 1995; 2002). Data from the in-depth interviews held with some of the inmates revealed that when colleagues die, there is always a delay in reporting the death for more than a day for the measure of the departed's meal ration.

According to Adeyemi (1990), there is more of the hardening of the inmates who are first offenders than their rehabilitation and preparation to live a life that would be law abiding and self respecting and supporting after their sentences in these supposed correctional homes.

Though according to Sarason and Sarason (1989) criminals are self-indulgent individuals, their sadistic, obsessive-compulsive and narcissistic qualities may not be quite obvious and therefore need professional helpers to work out the psychological explanations of the individual's difficulties. They can change and adjust to living a productive and contributing life. Also, Van Voorhis (1994) asserted that individuals who are high on negative emotionality and low on constraints are more likely to be involved in criminal behaviors. Though factors like environment, peer group, genetics and hereditary play significant roles in any human behaviors, personality traits are enduring within the individual and these determines his or her behaviors (Vold and Bernard, 1986; Adegoke, 1990).

Along this line, Akers (1977) lay claim to the fact that an understanding of a groups' as well as the individuals' in incarceration rating on standardized scale of neurotics as well as psychotics is needed if their pattern of impulsive behaviours would be understood and their expected change and growth in personality health be plotted, monitored, assessed and guaranteed.

This calls for serious and deliberate efforts to create the desired change among the generality of the inmates in Nigerian prisons given the dearth of researches as to their functioning while in prison and a poor follow-up when they complete their terms in these prisons. The foregoing suggests that the behaviours of these inmates need to be noted, understood and modified through a tailor made helping relationship, the nature of which could best be informed by data from the study of this nature.

Statement of the problem: Perhaps to actualize the purposes of imprisonment which are to reprimand, correct and rehabilitate, underscore the need for counselors as well as the other help givers and more importantly their

services (psychometrics, consultations, information, behavior contracting, placement, monitoring and follow-up) in the Nigerian prisons, a number of salient questions need to be asked and empirical answers provided if sustainable action programs will be designed to help the situation.

Research questions: What is the condition of the prisons in Nigeria?

- What does the statistics of the inmates look like in a typical prison in Nigeria?
- How do the inmates rate on the scale of neuroticism and psychotism?
- What is the nature of their in-prison behavior anomalies?
- Would the inmates express a desire to benefit from psychological interventions in their lives?
- What would they consider as needful in motivating them towards participation in such programs?

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to present data about the need for professional helpers and their services in the Nigerian prisons. Specifically it seeks to identify the personality type that is prevalent among the inmates, the conditions under which they live, their common behavior deficits so that the problems these have constituted in limiting the rehabilitation and personality restructuring efforts may be understood in the light of the required services of the professional help givers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a survey adopting the questionnaires and the in-depth key informant interview method to gather the relevant data.

Instrument: Tenibiaje (2002) An adapted and validated version of the Eysenck and Eysenck (1971) personality questionnaires (EPQ), which measures the selected personality traits of extroversion (E), neuroticism (N) and Psychotism (P) was used among the sample in this study. The questionnaire consists of 90 items which expected the respondents to either agree or otherwise to know the symptoms are descriptive of their living or life style.

Validity: Face and content validities of the questionnaires were established through topic and processed validity (Ebel, 1965; Curation, 1951) while the construct validity was determined by correlating the scores of some selected inmates and non-inmates, a significant negative correlation was derived from this later exercise confirming the constructs' validity status.

Reliability: The internal consistency measure of the instrument was determined by the split-half method which yielded a coefficient of 0.69 and significant at $p < 0.05$. The second instrument for data collection in this study was the in-depth key informant interview held with inmates and with the consent of the prison officials. It was about their itinerary, daily routines, punishments and the privileges allowed them in the prison.

Procedure: The instruments were administered personally with the consent of the subjects that make up the sample. Both literate and illiterate subjects were given sufficient time to think of their responses and take responsibility for their responses. The scores as well as the summation of the means of the scores were used to describe the personality of the inmates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A data collected were initially analyzed descriptively while inferences were drawn as to whether their scores especially on the selected personality traits were significantly different.

The descriptive analysis of the data generated, showed that out of 504 respondents, 406 were males (80.5%) and females were 98 (19.5%) as shown in Table 1.

Table 2 showed the living conditions of inmates in prisons in Nigeria. Three (1%) respondents affirmed that there was convenient and spacious accommodation while 483(98%) confirmed that the accommodation in prisons was not adequate and small number of inmates 3(1%) indicated that the accommodation was not available. Similarly a very large number of inmates 483(98%) indicated that the feeding was insufficient as compared with 3(1%) that indicated sufficient and adequate feeding in prisons.

Table 1: Descriptive data of the inmates in Nigerian prisons and the sample of this study

Sex	Male		Female		Total
	N	%	N	%	
Population	44,754	98.57	696	1.53	45,450
Sample	406	80.5	98	19.5	504

Table 2: Reports of inmates Assessment of the living conditions, Punishments and Privileges allowed in the Prisons (the in-depth key-informant interview)

	Sufficient and Adequate		Insufficient and Inadequate		Not Available	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Accommodation						
i. Spacious	3	1	483	98	3	1
ii. Convenient	3	1	483	98	3	1
Feeding						
i. Regularity	3	1	483	98	3	1
ii Sufficiency	3	1	483	98	3	1
-Access to Health Care/	15	3	459	91	30	6
-Access to Health Facilities	40	8	30	6	433	86
- Visitation by relatives	3	1	10	2	489	86
- Visitation by Help givers	6	2	40	8	454	97
- Access to enhancement Programmes	76	15	61	12	368	90
- Access to usable skills acquisition	35	7	161	32	307	73
- Access to personality change Programs	10	2	423	84	71	61
- Access to educative Programs						
(learning to read, write and do, arithmetic's)	15	3	207	41	282	14
- Access to information	5	1	15	3	484	96.6
- Access to physical exercises and relaxation facilities	136	27	60	12	307	61
- Coercive and Punitive measures	358	71	81	16	66	13
- Working without Pay	469	93	15	3	20	4
- Manual labour	403	80	45	9	55	11
- physical torture	373	74	60	12	71	14

Table 3: Report of confessions of behaviour anomalies among inmates (In-depth key informant interview)

In-prison behaviour	Very common		Common		Rare	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Anomalies						
-Rudeness	454	90	40	8	6	2
- Impatience	494	98	10	2	-	-
- Stealing	478	95	20	4	3	1
- Violence	459	91	40	8	3	1
- Bullying	141	28	201	40	3	1
- Cheating	459	91	40	8	3	1
- Drug Abuse	141	28	201	40	161	32
- Sodomy	55	11	292	58	156	31
- Hooliganism	5	1	15	3	483	96
- Rebellion	10	2	10	2	483	96
- Noise making and public nuisance	267	53	227	45		
- Lying	438	87	66	13		

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of the sample on extroverts, neurotics and psychotics scale

Groups	Male			Female		
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD
Extroverts	406	15.0936	11.441	98	19.2652	15.250
Neurotics	406	18.2537	17.205	98	19.2041	16.873
Psychotics	406	16.8818	21.034	98	15.438	19.689

Table 5: One way Analysis of Variance on the significant differences along the sample statistics (age, sex, length of confinement and nature of confinement) on their mean scores on the scale of Extroversion, Neurotics and Psychotics.

Groups	SS	Df	MS	Fc	Ft	p<0.05
Between	5754.706	3	2977.35	0.18	2.24	
Within	3199621.853	502	9076.96			
Total		505				

Four hundred and eighty three (86%), 489 (86%) and 454 (97%) indicated that access to health facilities, visitation by relatives and visitation by help givers, respectively are not available in Nigerian prisons.

Except for the physical torture and other coercive measures that people have known imprisonment to make

inmates experience, the majority of the inmates, over (80%) of inmates consider every of the needed and necessary provisions in the prisons as inadequate and insufficient.

Table 3 revealed that except for acts of hooliganism and rebellion towards the prison officials that are rated as having rare occurrence, every of the other behaviour anomalies and indulgences frequently occur and marks out the culture in the prison yards. Of notable disturbance is the act of drug abuse, especially marijuana smoking among the inmates. Rudeness, impatience, stealing, lying and violence recorded 90% and above. These behavior anomalies are very common among the prisoners in the prisons

Table 4 represent generally, the inmates scored high on the extroverts, neurotics and psychotics scales. This seems to corroborate the claims of Van-Voorhis (1994), Watson and Clark (1984) who established from a cross-cultural study of the traits of inmates that these array of symptoms which are impulsive and indulgent are qualities of criminals. William (1997) further asserted that these undesirable traits get worse when the individuals possessing are kept in confinements and not brought to realize them as well as undergo psychological/psychiatric treatment as the seriousness of the circumstance may demand.

Table 5. The analysis of variance result in Table 5 indicated that at $p < 0.05$, it appears that there is no significant difference in the high scores of the sample on Extroverts, Neurotics and Psychotics measures Scale. This is because F value (3.502) = 2.24 which is less than the F critical Value 3.84.

CONCLUSION

From the data, there appear a reason to agree with advocates of prison reforms that the conditions of imprisonment in Nigeria needs review and concerted efforts that demand policy formulation and review as its core for any meaningful improvement to be made. This becomes important in the face of the growing number of suspected and convicted criminals in the nation's prisons and the need to help Nigerians who the Amnesty International rated as being among the first three most venal citizens of the globalized world. Efforts need to be made to use the period of incarceration of these individuals who had been caught on the wrong side of the law to learn and affect acceptable behaviors and of the polished personality.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While we are not advocating that prisons be made a haven for indulgent, demented or hardened criminals, from the data and the discussion of the circumstances that generated them, there presents are gloomy picture of not only the living conditions of the inmates but a gross inadequacy of efforts to help them have a change of

personality and acceptable orientation towards life as well as style of living it when they complete their jail terms. Some of them during the in-depth interview, expressed a form of losing hope to ever have a life to return to or having anything to return to.

These speak of the need for the inclusion of the services of psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, and other help givers in behaviour modification and hope restoration on the staff list of the Nigerian prisons. Maybe earlier calls like this and efforts of the religious and philanthropic organizations to fill the yawning gap had failed because government has no policy on such matters but to effect the need, there is an urgency to make a policy statement in this direction as to make the nation 21st century complaint in meeting the conditions of Nigerian prisons becoming truly reformatory.

The policy statement need to emphasize specific time table for personal and group meetings with the inmates and with these array of help givers acting and fulfilling the roles of a teacher teaching heuristics, coaches and instructors on behaviour as well as attitude change. Efforts of the few NGOs and religious organization dedicated to these lofty objectives need to be commended but the underscored as grossly inadequate and hence inefficient.

This suggestion need not sound ludicrous, that is, of gathering convicted criminals or near demented personalities for lessons in good behaviours but the cost of this not being there as reflected in the list of in-prison indulgent behaviours cannot be quantified and the hope of reforming the inmates far and in between.

The UN charter advocates for it in asking that inmates be helped as much as possible during their period of incarceration to live a life of a contributing personality after their terms behind the bars. Nigeria need comes to terms with the fact that being rated as one of the three nations that parade the most venal citizen among the 212, would not be washed away by subjecting her convicted citizens to the exercise of the Nazi concentration camps of the second world war. As we often experience, the experiences of prisons, whether political or otherwise had always left the culprits worse off, hardened and psychopathic while the "soft-spined" ones end up committing suicide for having lived through such a humiliating experience.

The counselors especially would have in this role to be up and doing in: psychometrics and researches that would be focused on consistently measuring the status of the inmates on the variety of psychological traits and factors influencing such unhealthy traits that led them before the law and eventually earn them the jail sentence, especially that of neurotics and psychotics. These traits in the first instance, it needs to be noted, contributed to their being involved in crimes (William, 1997) and that led them behind bars and in turn may be aggravated their period of incarceration.

Also, holding consultations with other helping professionals for possible referrals on needed adjustment areas of the personality, placement in planned deliberately organized character reformation personality enhancement classes, counselling as in being into helping friendly relationship focused on relieving them of their emotional pent ups, information as in keeping the inmates informed of the state of matters in their homes, the society and the world in general.

REFERENCES

- Adegoke, A.A., 1990. A comparative analysis of prisoners and non-prisoners on three personality dimensions. *J. Res. in Counselling Psych.*, 2 (1): 46-51
- Adeyemi, A.A., 1990. Economic crime in developing societies. *Federal ministry of Justice Law Review Series*, 4, pp: 78-114.
- Akers, R.I., 1977. *Deviant Behaviour: A social learning approach*. Philadelphia: Cole Pub Coy.
- Box, S., 1987. *Recession, Crime and Punishment*, London: Macmillan Education
- Curation, E.E., 1951. *Validity in E.F Lindquist Educational Measurement and interpretation*, California: Wardsworth publication company, Belmont.
- Ebel, R.L., 1965. *Obtaining and Reporting Evidence on Content Validity*. Educational and Psychological Measurement. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Eysenck, H.J. and S.B.G. Eysenck, 1971. Crime and Personality: Item Analysis of Questionnaires Response. *Brit. J. Criminol.*, 2: 49-62.
- Jarma, I.M., 2002. Functions and Organizational structure of the Nigerian Prisons service. *The Reformer*, 1: 22-27.
- Malumfashi, L.B., 1997. Counseling for the rehabilitation of Prison inmates: A means to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. *The Counselor*, 18: 254.
- Sarason, I.G and B.R. Sarason, 1989. *Abnormal Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prenticehall Printers.
- Tenibiaje, D.J., 1995. *Personality Characteristics of Juvenile Delinquents and Adult criminals in Ondo State: A comparative study*. Unpublished M.E.D. Thesis in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin.
- Tenibiaje, D.J., 2002. *Personality Traits of inmates in some Nigerian Prisons* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria).
- UN, 1984. *Standard Minimum Rule for the treatment of Prisoners*. New-York: UN Information Division.
- Vold, G.B., and T.J. Bernard, 1986. *Theoretical Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van V.P., 1994. *Psychological classification of the adult male prison inmates*. New York: State of New York Press.
- Watson, D. and L. Clark, 1984. Negative affectivity: The disposition to experience aversive emotional states. *Psychol. Bull.*, 96: 465-490.
- William, K.S., 1997. *Textbook on Criminology*. 3rd Eds. Glasgow: Bell and Bain Limited.