

Psychological Resilience and Psychological Distress among Inmates of Correctional Centres in Benue State

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Abstract

The incidence and prevalence of psychological distress has been reported to be higher among custodial populations than the general population globally. Yet, not much attention is given to the state of psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. This study thus examined psychological resilience and psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, utilizing inmates in correctional centres in Benue State, comprising 295 (91.9%) males and 26 (8.1%) females. Their ages ranged from 16 – 66years (Mean age=37years, SD=1.08). The Resilience Scale and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale were used for data collection. Data analysis involved the use of Multiple Linear Regression. Findings revealed that, psychological resilience had a significant negative influence on psychological distress among the inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. The study made recommendations bordering on the need for correctional authorities to provide resilience training for inmates in correctional centres as a way of preventing, managing and mitigating the effect of psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State in particular and Nigeria at large.

Key Words: Psychological Resilience, Psychological Distress, Inmates

Introduction

Inmates in correctional centres, have the tendency to experience psychological distress, given that their freedom has been restricted, denying them access to the basic necessities of life. Among inmates in correctional centres, the peculiarity of their situation may pose predisposing potentials for psychological distress. Global estimates suggest that, there are more than 10.74 million people imprisoned around the world and one in seven has a psychological problem (Widra & Herring, 2021). Correctional centres as the case may be are places where convicts are confined for several purposes among which include: deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, retribution, and restitution (Niloofar et al., 2022).

In Africa, the prevalence of psychological distress among the general population as a whole, and inmates specifically is of particular concern due to resource constraints for mental health in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Winkler et al., 2017; World Health Organization, 2015). A systematic review of data from 24 countries calculated a 10.2% pooled

prevalence of major depression among male inmates, and 14.1% among female inmates. Furthermore, available evidence from data in 24 countries revealed a high pooled prevalence of 10.2% of psychological problems among prisoners in Africa (Aish et al., 2019).

In Nigeria, there is evidence suggesting high prevalence of psychological problems among inmates. In specific terms, studies revealed a 49.3% prevalence rate for schizophrenia, (29.6%) for depressive disorders, while approximately half (46.5%) used psychoactive substances (Eseadi, 2021; Olagunju et al., 2018). Similarly, the situation in Africa and Nigeria casts a direct shadow on Benue State, as evidence point to a high prevalence of psychological problems among prison inmates in Benue State (Emeka et al., 2020).

One factor implicated in predicting psychological distress among inmates is resilience. Psychological resilience is the ability to cope mentally or emotionally with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly (de Terte & Stephens, 2014). Resilience exists when the person uses mental processes and behaviours in promoting personal assets and protecting self from the potential negative effects of stressors (Robertson et al., 2015). Studies have found significant associations between high scores on psychological resilience and favourable health outcomes (Nuttman-Shwartz & Green, 2021). However, the role of psychological resilience on psychological distress among inmates is not well understood, hence this study sets to bridge this gap by examining resilience and psychological distress among inmates in correctional centres in Benue State:

Resilience and Psychological Distress

Adepoju (2021) examined the mediating effect of positive interventions, specifically spirituality and resilience on inmates' mental wellbeing. The impact of resilience and spirituality on psychological distress was measured by Resilience Scale and brief Spirituality Involvement and Beliefs Scale respectively. Findings showed that, resilience has a significant positive relationship with mental health among the participants.

Sekoni et al. (2022) examined the relationship between protective factors (social connectedness, self-esteem, social support, resilience) and the occurrence of common mental disorders among female urban slum dwellers in Ibadan, Nigeria. Resilience and social support were found to be protective against reporting symptoms of common mental disorders. Women who reported higher levels of social support and resilience were less likely to report common mental disorders respectively. Women who were 65 years and older were also less likely to report the occurrence of common mental disorders compared to those aged 18–34 years. The study concluded that, social support and resilience appear to be protective against common mental disorders among these respondents.

Tessitore et al. (2022) carried out a culturally sensitive quantitative investigation aimed at assessing the post-traumatic symptomatology, post-migratory difficulties, and resilience of 36 Nigerian male asylum seekers hosted in the province of Caserta, South Italy. A linear regression analysis was used to evaluate the influence of post-migratory difficulties and resilience on PTSD. Stratified bivariate analyses were also computed to detect PTSD group and no-PTSD group differences about post-migration difficulties and resilience levels. Regression analysis showed that PMLD numbers significantly increased the risk of having PTSD. No significant effect emerged for the level of resilience. Statistically significant differences between the PTSD group and non-PTSD group in relation to post-migratory difficulties were also found.

Ndata and Chima (2022) investigated the contributions of social inclusion and resilience in university students' life satisfaction in the Niger Delta region. The results showed that even as the effect of age was controlled for, social inclusion positively predicted satisfaction with life and contributed 11% in explaining the variance in life satisfaction. Higher satisfaction was also predicted by resilience which explained 28% of the variance in life

satisfaction. Resilience was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction, compared to social inclusion.

Hypotheses

- (i) There will be a significant influence of psychological resilience on psychological distress among inmates in correctional centres in Benue State.

Design

The cross-sectional survey design was adopted in this study. A cross-sectional survey design examines data at one point in time, and is best used to describe the status of phenomena and/or the relationships among variables (Shindi, 2017).

Population

The population for this study included 770 inmates across three Custodial centres (Makurdi, Gboko and Otukpo) in Benue State (Nigerian Correctional Services, 2023). Based on this population, a sample of 321 inmates was drawn.

Sampling

The researchers used purposive sampling technique to draw the participants for the study. This technique was deemed appropriate due to the prevalence of distress among inmates.

Participants

The participants included a sample of 321 inmates drawn from the three Custodial Centres in Makurdi, Gboko and Otukpo. They comprised 295 (91.9%) males and 26 (8.1%) females. Their ages ranged from 19 – 66years (Mean age=37years, SD=12.13). Furthermore, 100 (31.2%) were married, 130 (40.5%) were single, 31 (9.7%) were separated, 21 (6.5%) were widowed/widowers, while 39 (12.1%) were divorced. Moreover, 238 (74.1%) were from Makurdi Custodial Centre; 50 (15.6%) in Gboko Custodial Centre; while 33 (10.3%) were from Otukpo Custodial Centre.

Instruments

The Resilience Scale was developed by Wagnild and Young (1993). The scale assesses resilience in four dimensions: Perseverance (items: 7, 12, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22 and 25), Sense of Life (items: 3, 5, 8, 13, 14, 19, and 25), Serenity (6, 9, 10, 11, and 20), Self-reliance and Self-confidence (items: 4, 12, 18, and 23) using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = Disagree to 7 = Agree. The scale showed an internal consistency coefficient of .91 for the entire scale, and a test-retest reliability coefficient .77 – .84 over a four-week period, with adequate content, construct, and concurrent validities. In terms of its subscales, the following reliability scores were obtained: Perseverance = .84, Sense in Life = .81, Serenity = .72, Self-reliance and Self-confidence = .75. As regards scoring, the scale generates scores ranging from 25 – 175, with higher scores indicating higher resilience and vice versa.

The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale was developed by Kessler et al. (2003). The scale contains 10-items about emotional states, and measures psychological distress using a five-point scale that ranges from: 5 = All of the time to 1 = None of the time. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88 for the unidimensional structure. Scores on the scale are summed up yielding a possible minimum score of 10 points and maximum of 50. Low scores indicate low level of psychological distress, while high scores mean high levels of psychological distress.

Procedure

This study was carried out in Gboko, Makurdi and Otukpo. Data for this study was collected indirectly with the help of research assistants who were correctional service staff in the three correctional centres in the state. A letter of introduction was taken to the authorities of the correctional centres, accompanied with another letter seeking permission to carry out the study using inmates from the three correctional centres (i.e. Makurdi, Gboko and Otukpo). After obtaining permission, the consents of the inmates were sought and confidentiality assured, then the 321 questionnaires were administered to inmates by research assistants, who were staff of the correctional centres, and who have access to the inmates. The completed questionnaire copies were thereafter retrieved and considered for analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, mean and standard deviation were used in analyzing the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Multiple linear regression was used in testing the study hypothesis.

Results

Table 1: Summary of multiple linear regression showing influence of psychological resilience on psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State.

Predictors	R	R ²	df	F	β	t	p
Constant	-.387	.150	4,316	14.052		38.790	.000
Perseverance					.272	2.197	.032
Sense in Life					-.389	-6.758	.000
Serenity					-.066	-1.261	.208
SR&SC					-.342	-3.594	.000

Results in table 1 showed that, psychological resilience had a significant negative influence on psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State [$R^2=.150$, $F(4,316)=14.052$, $p<.001$]. The findings further revealed that, psychological resilience accounted for 15% of the total variance observed in psychological distress. Furthermore, findings on the contributions of the dimensions of psychological resilience to psychological distress show that, sense of life made the highest significant negative contribution ($\beta=-.389$, $t=-6.758$, $p<.01$), followed by self-reliance and self-confidence ($\beta=-.342$, $t=-3.594$, $p<.01$). On the other hand, perseverance made a significant positive contribution to psychological distress ($\beta=.272$, $t=2.197$, $p<.05$), while serenity made no significant contribution to psychological distress ($\beta=-.066$, $t=-1.261$, $p>.05$).

Discussion

Hypothesis one tested the influence of psychological resilience on psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. Findings revealed that, psychological resilience had a significant negative influence on psychological distress among inmates. This suggests that, inmates of correctional centres in Benue State who are high on psychological resilience are likely to experience low levels of psychological distress. This finding agrees with other studies who reported psychological resilience to serve as a protective factor against adverse conditions among various populations (Sekoni et al., 2021; Adepoju, 2021; Ndata & Chima, 2022). From this standpoint, resilience can buffer the effect of psychological distress, even among inmates who are genetically predisposed and exposed to adverse conditions. The finding also agrees with that of Adepoju (2021) who found significant positive relationship between resilience and mental health among inmates in Bida Prison;

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that psychological resilience has significant negative influence on psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. This means that, inmates with high psychological resilience will be less prone and less likely to experience high levels of psychological distress.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from the present study, it is recommended that since resilience can also be learned, prison authorities in Nigeria should employ the services of clinical psychologists to provide resilience training to prison inmates. This is important in view of the established link between resilience and psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study has brought an indigenous contribution to our understanding of the relationship between resilience and psychological distress among inmates of correctional centres in Benue State. Such knowledge is important because it has deepened our understanding in this regard, and paved the way for informed, actionable recommendations and proposals towards prevention, mitigation, management and treatment of psychological distress among prison inmates in the study area.

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