

## Original Research Article

# Correlates of psycho-social health problems among prison inmates in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria

Chukumati N. Christiana\*, Geory O. Obiechina, Ubong S. Akpan

Department of Human Kinetics & Health Education, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

**Received:** 15 November 2016

**Revised:** 17 November 2016

**Accepted:** 06 December 2016

### \*Correspondence:

Dr. Chukumati N. Christiana,  
E-mail: [cchukumati@yahoo.com](mailto:cchukumati@yahoo.com)

**Copyright:** © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study investigated correlates of psycho-social health problems among prison inmates in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided the study.

**Methods:** The study adopted a correlational design. The population used was one thousand, three hundred and sixty-two (1362) respondents comprised of all the prison inmates' from three states in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study also consisted of inmates from various social classes. Structured questionnaire comprising 36 items were administered to the inmates to provide information covering the seven research questions and hypotheses. Pearson's product moment correlation was utilized to obtain a reliability value of 0.76. Linear-regression and t-test associated with linear-regression were used to analyze the RQ and H<sub>0</sub>.

**Results:** The results of the study demonstrated that inadequate prison infrastructures and long span of stay were indicators of well-being issues.

**Conclusions:** In view of the findings, it was concluded that basically, health is determined by interplay of factors such as physical, mental and social. It is important that Government and Non- Governmental organization should intensify their efforts in rehabilitating the prison to improve the health standards of the inmates. Judiciary system should facilitate inmates' trials instead of keeping them too long in prison before trial.

**Keywords:** Health problems, Psycho-social, Prison inmates

## INTRODUCTION

Health is a critical human right, seen unmistakably by every individual. It goes past the limit for one to work effectively with no block with the run of the daily activity. One could be physically fit to adjust to the activities of life, yet unfit genuinely and socially. Health issue develops when there is weakness of the body to work suitably. The Constitution of World Health Organization (WHO 1946) conceived health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being of an

individual and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity.' Psycho-social allude to interrelationship amongst individual and his or her surroundings. WHO in Artem (ND).<sup>1,2</sup> Characterized psychosocial wellbeing as a condition of mental, enthusiastic, social, and profound prosperity, 'Psychological wellness is the reasoning part of psychosocial wellbeing. It manages convictions and qualities in life, how one identifies with others and reacts to circumstances in life. People with psychosocial disorders often experience difficulty in communicating effectively with others as well as functioning in social

situations. Harassment faced by inmates from prison officers and other stronger inmates live inmates psychological traumatized.

Sound physical wellbeing implies 'going ahead with a strong lifestyle, for instance, eating awesome food, general Acxiom, keeping up a key separation from dangerous inclinations, settling on careful decisions about sex, learning and seeing the symptoms of disease, getting reliable restorative and dental checkups and making vital move to prevent injuries (Insel & Roth)'.<sup>3</sup> This state of sound physical prosperity may not be achievable by those in prison care, as they are precluded from claiming such adaptability. Unhealthy body gives rise to unhealthy mind. A prison is a disadvantaged area where inmates are forcibly confined and restricted of varieties of freedoms under the authority of the state as a form of punishment. They are prevented from claiming self-rule, as they cannot settle on choices about dinners, hygienic practices, and amusement exercises, medical care amongst others. The shock of imprisonment usually lives the inmates with distraught feelings as life in prison is devastated; inmates face the trauma of losing contact with family and friends, loss of job and confidentialities as well as loss of educational opportunities. Obioha<sup>4</sup> submitted that 'overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of food and medicines and denial of contact with families and friends, contradicts United Nations (UN) standards for the treatment of prisoners' Majority of Nigerian prisons are filled above their capacity and as such, inmates are paired in a bed while some were made to sleep on bare floor in filthy cells.<sup>4</sup>

All over the world including Nigeria, prison is an institution established to provide rehabilitative and reformatory measures for individuals who have violated the rules and regulations of their society. Obioha and Moro saw prison as 'a reformatory institution, which aims at providing a rehabilitative and correctional facility for those who have violated the rules and regulation of their society and not bed of roses as the inmates are there for penal purposes. It is not also supposed to be a bed of thorns and thistles meant to snuff life out of the occupants'.<sup>4,5</sup> Melvin explained that 'Prisons is miserable conditions with increment load among detainees'.<sup>6</sup> The poor living state of the prisons are appalling and cause damages in the overall well-being of the inmates. The poor living state of the confinement offices are stunning and cause hurts in the general flourishing of the prisoners. Nevertheless, sickening living conditions of the prisoners, for instance, stuffing, poor sanitation, nonappearance of support and solutions in like manner constitute threats to their prosperity in this way exhibiting their lives to hazard. This was in line with the view of Ndukwe as 'the use of bucket latrine has exposed the inmates to health hazards and this can lead to epidemics'.<sup>7</sup> These poor environments have adverse health implications. Thigpen, Solomon, Keiser and Oritiz K stated that Confinement in overcrowded prisons and larger, "super max" prisons result to serious psychological problems, since prisoners

in such institutions spend many hours in solitary or in segregated housing. Depression and heightened anxiety are more, as the inmates' time of isolation is prolonged (Petersilia).<sup>8,9</sup>

Socio-economic and political factors are determinants of health which constitutes social health problems. Gupta and Mahajan, stated that 'social environment indicates the complex of psychosocial components affecting the soundness of the individual and group'.<sup>10</sup> In each general public, individual had requirements for affection, security, comprehension and opportunity of thought and expression. If such needs are not satisfied, the individual may be adversely affected both physically and emotionally. Poor social health is more common in low socio-economic groups. Examples are Isolation, stigmatization, drugs abuse, sexually deviant behaviour, childhood delinquency and general crime and violence. Prison institution constitutes high, average and low classes of people. Each group requires equal attention. These are far-fetched by the prison inmates. Forceful confinement affects one psychologically both young and old. Therefore, this motivated the researcher to find out correlates of psychological health problems among prison inmates in south-south region of Nigeria.

## METHODS

The design adopted for this study was a correlational research design. The proportionate stratified random sampling and purposive technique was used to select 1/3 inmates from three prisons in south-south geo-political zone. A total population of 1,362 responded to the questionnaire. A thirty-six item questionnaire consisting of health problems, social factors and psychological feelings of the inmates was used after the instrument went through all the required pre-test and was found to have reasonable face and content validity. Reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The data collated were analyzed with the aid of Statistical Packages in Social Sciences (SPSS). Research question and hypotheses were analyzed using linear regression and t-test associated with linear regression.

## RESULTS

The result of study showed the summary of the correlation R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate.  $R=0.089$ ,  $R^2=0.008$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.007$ . This showed that poor prison infrastructure accounted only 0.8% health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria (Table 1a).

The study revealed that the calculated t-test value was given as -3.285 and the significant value was given at 0.001. Since the significant value was less than the probability value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, poor prison infrastructure was a

significant predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria (Table 1b).

Findings of the study showed the summary of the correlation R, R square, adjusted R square and standard error of the estimate.  $R=0.1022$ ,  $R^2=0.010$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.010$ . This showed that duration of stay in prison accounted for only 1.04% health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria (Table 2a).

The study revealed that the calculated t-test value was given as .120 and the significant value was given at 0.001. Since the significant value was less than the

probability value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, duration of stay in prison was a significant predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria (Table 2b).

**Table 1a: Linear regression analysis showing poor prison infrastructure as a predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria.**

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	0.089 <sup>a</sup>	0.008	0.007	0.3.57321

**Table 1b: T-Test associated with linear regression showing poor prison infrastructure as a predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria.**

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	16.079	0.276		58.155	0.000
Poor prison infrastructure	-0.131	0.040	-0.089	-3.285	0.001

a: Dependent Variable: health problems; b: Predictor (constant): lack of medical services/drugs, poor nutrition/water supply, lack of toilet, lack of skill acquisition and recreational facilities).

**Table 2a: Linear regression analysis showing duration of stay in prison as a predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	0.102 <sup>a</sup>	0.010	0.010	3.58039

**Table 2b: T-Test associated with linear regression showing duration of stay in prison as a predictor of health problems among prison inmates in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria.**

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	15.206	0.209		72.905	0.000
Duration of stay in prison	0.013	0.108	0.003	0.120	0.001

a: Dependent Variable: health problem; b: Predictor (constant) length of stay in prison.

## DISCUSSION

### Poor prison infrastructures

These include congestion with poor ventilation, poor water /food supply, lack of medical services, lack of recreational and skill acquisition facilities. The study demonstrated that poor jail foundation accounts just 0.8% wellbeing issues among jail detainees in South locale. This was in line with other researches. Adebola has revealed that 'over-population was one of the multiple problems facing Nigerian prisons today and the deplorable state of prison led to death of hundreds of people in detention.<sup>11</sup> 'Skin scabies and bilharzias were among the irresistible illnesses reported in Agodi jail in 1987' (Ifionu).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Ndukwe clarified that 'the

utilization of 'can restroom' has presented the detainees to wellbeing perils and this can prompt scourges'. Poor ventilation and lacking restorative consideration help the spread of infections in jail. Globally transferable infections, such as, TB, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis "C" are normally issues found among jail detainees.<sup>7</sup>

### Duration of stay in prison

The study demonstrated that long span of stay represented just 0.4% wellbeing issues of jail detainees in penitentiaries in South-South zone of Nigeria. Melancholy and elevated nervousness are produced through prolonged separation from loved ones. This was bolstered by Liebling (1999 in Petersilia) as they clarified that congestion in detainment facilities and control in

bigger, "super max" penitentiaries causes genuine mental problems.<sup>9</sup> Many inmates are left in the prison without trials of their cases by the judiciary system. This negative outcomes of long haul containment recognized general crumbling of mental and physical strength of the detainee.

These variables have incredible impact on wellbeing. Health is determined by influence of dangers found in our physical environment like air pollution, poor waste /sewage disposal overcrowding amongst others. The researcher therefore recommended that along these lines, satisfactory measure ought to be taken to restore the detainees and change the jail to keep away from the spread of these maladies which won't just influence the detainees however to the all-inclusive community through released detainees or prison officers.

Government should reform the prison and improve infrastructure to ensure that inmates are duly rehabilitated so they will not be thorn to the society after discharge as imprisonment entails loss of privacy, over population and also isolated from daily environments.

Judiciary should facilitate inmates' trials to avoid causing more psychological trauma that can endanger the lives of inmates.

## CONCLUSION

In view of the findings, it was concluded that basically, health is determined by interplay of factors such as physical, mental and social. It is important that Government and Non- Governmental organization should intensify their efforts in rehabilitating the prison to improve the health standards of the inmates. Judiciary system should facilitate inmates' trials instead of keeping them too long in prison before trial.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special appreciation goes to my supervisor Associate prof J.E.F. Okpako, Dr. (Mrs). Golda O. Ekenedo and all other lecturers in the department of Human kinetics and Health Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria for their wonderful contributions.

*Funding: No funding sources*

*Conflict of interest: None declared*

*Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee*

## REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization. Constitution. Geneva, WHO; 1987;147:18.
2. Artem C. Improving Psychosocial Health - Factors & Positive Steps (ND). Retrieved From <http://study.com/academy/lesson/improving-psychosocial-health-factor-positive-steps.html>.
3. Insel PM, Roth W. Core Concept in Health. USA, New York. MC Graw-Hill; 2010: 2.
4. Obioha EE. Challenges and Reforms in the Nigerian prisons system. J Soc Sci. 2011;27(2):95-109.
5. Moro A. Homors that inmate face in Nigeria prison. Nigeria Tribune Newspaper, 2014.
6. Melvin AO. Prison health in Nigeria: A sociological discourse. Academic Journals. 2013;7(2):38-40.
7. Ndukwe C. Nigerian Prison service and challenges of social welfare Administration: A study of Abakaliki Prison. J Policy and Development Studies. 2014;01.
8. Thigpen ML, Solomon L, Keiser GM, Ortiz M. Effective Prison Mental Health Services. Guidelines to Expand and Improve Treatment 2004. US Department of Justice. National Institute of corrections, 320 First Street, WW Washington DC, 20534. National Institute of corrections. <http://www.nicic.org>.
9. Petersilia J. When Prisoners Return to the community: Political, Economic and Social consequences. Paper from the Executive sessions on sentencing and Corrections, issues for 21st century2000.US Department of Justice programs. National Institute of Justice.
10. Gupta MC, Mahagan BK. Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine. New Delhi, Jaypee Brothers. 2009: 109.
11. Adebola O. Multiple problems facing Nigerian Prisons revealed. Daily News Watch. 2014: July, 3.
12. Ifionu O. Hell on earth: our prisons and dreaded chamber, African concord, 1987;147;14-21.
13. Liebling A. Prison Suicide and Prisoner Coping, in Prison" ed. Michael Tonry and Joan. 1999.

**Cite this article as:** Christiana CN, Obiechina GO, Akpan US. Correlates of psycho-social health problems among prison inmates in south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. Int J Community Med Public Health 2017;4:603-6.