

## **INFLUENCE OF SEX AND YEARS OF INCARCERATION ON THE WELL BEING OF PRISON INMATES IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper investigated the influence of sex and years of incarceration on the well-being of prison inmates in Nigeria. The study was carried out in Port Harcourt prison with a sample of 250 inmates who were composed through stratified sampling technique from a population of 2,997 inmates. Five null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and relevant data for their analysis were collected through an indirect administration of copies of ‘influence of incarceration on prison inmates’ questionnaire which was administered by the researchers on the respondents. The reliability coefficient for the five-sub-sections of this instrument and the overall were 0.79; 0.80; 0.80, 0.80, 0.80 and 0.80 respectively. The hypotheses were tested with two-way analysis of variance. The results among other things show that years of incarceration do not significantly influence the psychological, social vocational and educational well-being of inmates. It however influences significantly their physical well being. The results also show that sex does not significantly influence the physical, psychological and social well-being of inmates. Sex however significantly influences the vocational and educational well-being of inmates. These results were discussed and some recommendations were also made. One of the recommendations is that professional guidance counselors and other psychological care givers in prison service should render similar types of assistance/services to all inmates of the prison irrespective of their years of incarceration and sex.*

**KEYWORDS:** Sex, Years, Incarceration, Well-Being, Prison.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

Incarceration is a feature of the criminal justice system. It is the detention of a person in prison, typically as punishment for a crime (Anonymous, a). It is a state of being imprisoned. Incarceration goes along side with ill treatment given to incarcerated persons. Such ill treatment can be described as torture be it physical, mental or emotional infliction. In Nigeria, incarcerated inmates of Nigerian prisons are routinely tortured and ill treated (Anonymous, b). This act is shameful, embarrassing, disgraceful, opprobrious, scandalous and outrageous. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (other ill treatment) are violations of human rights, condemned by the international community as an offence to human dignity and prohibited in all circumstances under international law (Anonymous, c).

Prison is the medium in which crime rate is controlled through incarceration. A modern society without prison service cannot function effectively and efficiently. Wikipedia free encyclopedia cited in Alao (2009:1) described prison “as a place in which individuals are physically confined or interred and usually deprived of a range of personal freedom”. It is a state or federally operated facility for the incarceration of felony offenders sentenced by the criminal courts

(Siegal cited in Agbakwuru, 2012:110). Put differently, prison is a place where incarcerated individuals are kept away from the society as a punishment for offence committed because a society without laws that guide the conduct of its members cannot be in existence. The Reformer (2002:14) stated that “the national security construct of a country cannot be conceptualized in complete and concrete terms without a secure and functional prison system”. The Nigeria Prison Act no 9 of 1972 laws of the Federation of Nigeria cap 366 section 2, subsections 2004 as cited in Omu (2008:1) states that “the Minister of internal affairs (interior) may by order in the federal gazette declare any building or place in Nigeria to be a prison, and by the same or subsequent order specify the area for which the prison is established.

The judiciary system convicts an individual who commits crime either by incarceration or by giving him/her an option of fine or both. Non convicted individuals may also be incarcerated in order to protect their lives from attack. The awaiting trials without bail are also incarcerated in prison custody pending their trial, acquittal or conviction. In the light of this, the prison is an arm of the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, this arm of the criminal justice system is not functioning effectively in Nigeria. Its poor performance can be inferred from the large number of awaiting trial persons who have spent many years in incarceration. For instance, data gathered from the Port Harcourt prison records show that out of 2,997 persons who were incarcerated in Port Harcourt prison, Nigeria at the time of this study, as many as 2633 were awaiting trial males (ATM) and 38 were awaiting trial females (ATF). Previous study by Ehonwa (1996) show that many of the awaiting trial persons (ATPs) have stayed in incarceration for periods ranging from one and ten years or more. The conditions of these awaiting trial persons are worse than that of the convicted person (CPs) who is also incarcerated in prisons. This is as a result of the fact that awaiting trial persons (ATPs) are denied many of the “benefits” accorded to the convicted persons (CPs).

“The prison service is a barometer for measuring the success or failure of the judicial process” (Ogundipe, 2006:35). According to the same source it is empowered by law to perform the following functions:

- Take into custody all those legally interned.
- Produce them before the courts as and when due.
- Identify the causes of their anti-social conduct.
- Set in motion mechanism for their training and reformation, preparatory to returning then back to the society as normal, law abiding citizens.
- Generate revenue for the state through the use of prison farms and industries for the purpose.

There are different types or categories of prison in Nigeria prison system. These include: satellite prison, prison camp (open prison), lock-ups, divisional/provincial prison, medium security prison, convict prison, maximum security prison, borstal institution, female prison and prison farm center, (Omu, 2008). Each of these forms of prison performs different functions and serves different purposes.

People incarcerated in prison are classified into categories based on their age, status, types of offence, previous records, etc. The purpose of classification is to minimize the risk of bad influence from hardened criminals on others and to facilitate the prisoners’ rehabilitation, reformation and re-integration into the society. It is also necessary for security and training purposes.

Sadly, there seen to be lack of research reports on the influence of classification of incarcerated persons in Nigerian prisons on their overall well-being. Overall well-being in this context refers to the sum total of wellness of an individual in terms of biological and physical health, emotional and psychological wellness, mental and social states, etc. It is synonymous with a state of physical, mental, psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being and not just the absence of diseases or infirmities, (World Health Organization cited in Agbakwuru, 2013). Knowledge of the influence of classification of incarcerated persons on defined criteria on their overall well-being is key to effective prison reformation. It is also pre-requisite to any step or measure which is aimed at improving the well-being of incarcerated inmates of Nigerian prisons. This study was therefore embarked upon to fill this apparent gap in knowledge. Therefore, the problem of the study posed as a question is “to what extent does sex and years of incarceration influence the overall well-being of prison inmates in Nigeria?”

The study was guided by five null hypotheses thus:

1. There is no significant influence of years of incarceration on the physical well-being of the inmates based on their sex.
2. Years of incarceration do not significantly influence the psychological well-being of inmates based on their sex.
3. Years of incarceration do not significantly influence the social well-being of inmates based on their sex.
4. Years of incarceration do not significantly influence the vocational well-being of inmates based on their sex.
5. Years of incarceration do not significantly influence the educational well-being of inmates based on their sex.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was carried out in Port Harcourt prison in Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria and the design of study is ex-post facto design. This design involves collecting and analyzing data about some variables retrospectively or about variables which are already in place without manipulating any of them, in order of find out how some of them influence or are related to other variables (Nwankwo, 2010). Ex-post facto design was considered most appropriate for this study because the inmates are already incarcerated. The researchers therefore only made comparison of the scores from the dependent variables in order to find out the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variables.

The population of this study was 2,997 inmates who were incarcerated in Port Harcourt prison at the time of this study (24/04/2014). Out of this population, 2,633 were awaiting trial males (ATM), 38 awaiting trial females (ATF), 78 convicted males (CPM) and 7 convicted females (CPF). Eighteen others were lifers, 208 were condemned male prisoners, 9 were condemned female prisoners and the remaining 6 were male lodgers. The sample of the study consists of 250 inmates of Port Harcourt prison. They were composed through stratified random sampling technique. One hundred and seventy two of the sample were awaiting trial male (ATM), 28 were awaiting trial female (ATF), 20 were convicted males, 6 were convicted females 11 were condemned males and 5 were condemned females. Two others were lifers while the remaining 6 were lodgers. Out of the 250 sample, 211 were males while females were 39. Stratified random sampling technique was considered most appropriate for adoption in the study because

there are different categories of incarcerated persons in the prison. This sampling technique ensured that all the categories were represented in the study.

Relevant data for testing the hypotheses were sought for and collected through the administration of copies of a questionnaire tagged “influence of incarceration on prison inmates (ICPI)” on the sample. This instrument was developed by the researchers and it was administered on them through the prison officers. The instrument was designed in the pattern of a modified 4-point likert type scale and contained 50 items which were divided into five sub-sections corresponding with the issues being investigated. The reliability co-efficient of these 5 sub-sections established through Cronbach alpha were 0.79; 0.80; 0.80; 0.80 and 0.80 while the overall reliability co-efficient was 0.80. The hypotheses were tested with two-way analysis of variance.

## RESULTS

The results of the statistical test of the five null hypotheses are presented in the following tables

**Table 1:** Summary of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of years of incarceration on physical well-being of inmates based on their sex.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Years of incarceration	70.46	2	85.23	5.29	0.006
Sex	10.525	1	10.53	0.65	0.420
Years of incarceration by sex	68.69	1	34.35	2.13	0.121
Error	3930.79	244			
<b>Total</b>	<b>4132.30</b>	<b>249</b>			

The information on table 1 shows that the influence of years of incarceration on the physical well-being of the inmates has an F-value of 5.29 which is significant at 0.006 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 (i.e.  $0.006 < 0.05$ ). This indicates that years of incarcerated significantly influence the physical well-being of inmates. The table also reveals that the calculated F-value of 0.65 for sex was not significant at 0.420 which is greater than the chosen alpha level of 0.005.

This also indicates that sex of the inmates does not significantly influence their physical well-being. Finally, table 1 show that the calculated F-value of 2.13 obtained for this interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex of the inmates was not significant, since the significant level of 0.121 is greater than the chosen probability level of 0.05. Therefore, interaction effect of years of incarceration and sex do not significantly influence the physical well-being of prison inmates.

**Table 2:** Summary of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of years of incarceration on the psychological well-being of inmates on their sex

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Years of incarceration	140.98	2	70.49	2.69	0.070
Sex	0.170	1	0.170	0.006	0.936
Years of incarceration by sex	119.06	2	59.53	2.67	0.106
Error	6401.76	244	26.24		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6590.10</b>	<b>249</b>			

The result on table 2 reveals that the 2.69 calculated F-value for years of incarceration was not significant at 0.05, the chosen level of probability; hence years of incarceration do not significantly influence the psychological well-being of prison inmates. The table also shows that the 0.006 calculated F-value for sex was not significant. This means that sex do not significantly influence the psychological well-being of the inmates. Finally, table 2 also shows that the 2.67 calculated F-value of interaction effect on incarceration and sex was not significant hence, years of incarceration do not interact significantly with sex to influence the psychological well-being of inmates.

**Table 3:** Summary of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of years of incarceration on the social well-being of the inmates based on their sex

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Years of incarceration	15.85	2	7.93	0.684	0.505
Sex	7.34	1	7.34	0.634	0.427
Years of incarceration by sex	18.89	2	9.45	0.816	0.443
Error	2825.46	244	11.58		
<b>Total</b>	<b>2891.84</b>	<b>249</b>			

The result on table 3 shows that the calculated F-value of 0.684 for years of incarceration was not significant at ( $p > 0.05$ ) the chosen level of probability hence, years of incarceration do not significantly influence the social well-being of the inmates. The result further reveals that the calculated F-value for sex which is 0.634 is not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ); therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. A critical look at the table also reveals that the calculated F-value of 0.816 for interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex was also not significant. The conclusion which can be drawn from this result is that there is no significant interaction effect of years of incarceration and sex on the social well-being of the inmates.

**Table 4:** Summary of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of years of incarceration on the vocational well-being of the inmates based on their sex

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Years of incarceration	100.68	2	50.34	1.58	0.209
Sex	731.74	1	731.74	22.89	0.000
Years of incarceration by sex	61.39	2	30.70	0.960	0.384
Error	7798.63	244	31.70		
<b>Total</b>	<b>8928.92</b>	<b>249</b>			

Table 4 reveals that the 1.58 calculated F-value for years of incarceration was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) therefore, years of incarceration do not significantly influence the vocational well-being of the inmates. Information on the table also reveals that the calculated F-value for sex, 22.89 was significant hence sex significantly influences the vocational well-being of the inmates. Furthermore, table 4 reveals that the 0.960 calculated F-value for interaction between years of incarceration and sex was not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). The conclusion which can be drawn from this result is that there is no significant interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex on the vocational well-being of the inmates.

**Table 5:** Summary of two-way analysis of variance on the influence of years of incarceration on educational well-being of the inmates based on their sex

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Years of incarceration	5.51	2	2.76	0.090	0.914
Sex	409.47	1	409.07	13.39	0.000
Years of incarceration by sex	32.80	1	16.40	0.531	0.586
Error	7462.20	244	30.583		
<b>Total</b>	167146.00	249			

A critical look at table 5 reveals that the calculated F-value for years of incarceration group is 0.090 which was not significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ) hence years of incarceration do not have any significant influence on the educational well-being of the inmates. The table also revealed that the calculated F-value for sex 13.39 was significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) hence it was deduced that sex significantly influence the educational well-being of the inmates in favour of males. Finally, table 5 revealed that the calculated F-value of 0.531 for interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex was not significant hence there is no significant interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex on the educational well-being of the inmates.

## Discussion of Findings

Statistical analysis of hypothesis one shows that years of incarceration significantly influence the inmates' physical well-being. This result is not surprising because many prison inmates suffer from various kinds of skin and other diseases. The poor feeding, poor sanitary condition and poor medical facilities available to prison inmates means that as one stays longer in incarceration, one's physical health will suffer more harm. The result of the same hypothesis also shows that sex did not significantly influence the physical well-being of the inmates. This finding is also expected because all prison inmates are exposed to the same environment and conditions irrespective of their sex.

In a related way, analysis of hypothesis two shows that years of incarceration do not significantly influence the psychological well-being of prison inmates. This finding seems to collaborate common sense in that the longer one stays in incarceration, the better the individual comes to terms with his/her conditions and based on this, adopt appropriate coping strategies

to get adjusted to one's situation. This assertion seems to collaborate the finding of Wooldredge (1999) that inmates appear to be more depressed, anxious and stressed when they spend less time in structured activities, receive fewer visitation and are victimized. Considering the influence of sex, the result shows no significant difference. This finding was not expected because it contradicts popular belief in the researchers' environment that under every circumstance, men are more resilient than women.

The result of the analysis of hypothesis 3 shows that years of incarceration do not significantly influence the social well-being of the inmates. This finding is expected, reason being that those who spend longer years in incarceration must have acclimatized with the situation in the prison as regards inter prisoners' relationship and the new rules of life in prison. Also, the result of the analysis shows that sex does not significantly influence the social well-being of the inmates probably because both males and females are faced with the same situation in the prison. There was also no interaction effect of years of incarceration and sex on the social well-being of inmates.

On the issue of vocational well-being of the inmates, the result shows that years of incarceration do not significantly influence the vocational well-being of the inmates. Considering the influence of sex, the F-value was significant and this show that sex significantly influence the vocational well-being of the inmates. This finding is expected due to the fact that males face more challenges than females and have more zeal than the females. This is likely the reason why they seem to take the training more seriously than their female counterparts. This finding correspond with that of Michelle (2010) who carried out a research on the contribution of pre-incarceration experience and prison based programmes to post release employment acquisition, retention and recidivism and found out that men have a significantly higher probability than women in acquiring and retaining employment after release from prison with regards to programme completion. Again, the result also shows that there is no significant interaction effect between years of incarceration and sex on the vocational well-being of the inmates.

Finally, the statistical analysis of hypothesis five show that years of incarceration do not significantly influence the educational well-being of inmates. The explanation of this type of result may not be unconnected with the fact that those who have spent longer years in incarceration and are about regaining their freedom take the prison educational programme seriously knowing quite well its usefulness and implications to their post incarceration well-being while those who have spent less time in incarceration take the programme seriously as a way of acquiring useful knowledge and skills that will help them to survive incarceration.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- Professional guidance counsellors and other psychological care givers in prison service should render similar types of assistance/services to all inmates of the prison irrespective of their years of incarceration and sex.
- All agencies and institutions that have roles to play towards the welfare of incarcerated persons should make concerted efforts to enhance their physical, psychological social, vocational and educational well-being.
- The government and other institutions that are concerned with prison reform should expediate action on that. This is with a view to enhancing the welfare of incarcerated persons.

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