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FRAGMENTED HOMES AND ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AS PREDICTORS OF RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES OF KEFFI MEDIUM SECURITY CORRECTIONAL CUSTODIAL CENTRE, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Fragmented Homes and Adverse Childhood Experiences as Predictors of Recidivism among Inmates of Keffi Medium Security Correctional Custodial Centre, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The data were collected from a sample of 232 inmates at Keffi Correctional Centre through a structured questionnaire. The convenience sampling technique was adopted to select the participants. The participants comprises of 156 males and 76 females of ages 18 and above. The results of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between fragmented homes and recidivism, $R = .348$, $R^2 = .121$, $F(1, 230) = 44.544$, $p < .001$. The results of the second hypothesis revealed a significant negative relationship between ACEs and recidivism, which means ACEs explained 5.0% of the variance in recidivism among inmates. The third hypothesis used multiple regression mode, because it measured all the three variables in the study. The results revealed that fragmented homes and ACEs together accounted for 38.4% of the variance in recidivism among the inmates. Specifically, fragmented homes significantly predicted recidivism ($\beta = .129$, $t = 3.177$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [0.138, 0.585]), and adverse childhood experiences had a stronger and more significant predictive effect ($\beta = .598$, $t = 14.722$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.122, 1.468]). The major findings showed that both fragmented home and early childhood experience jointly predict recidivism among inmates. These findings were discussed in the light of relevant literature and it was recommended that government and relevant stakeholders develop community-based reintegration and support systems for ex-offenders.

Keyword: *recidivism, fragmented home, early childhood experiences, inmates, Keffi*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Recidivism remains a considerable problem which faces societies and governments throughout the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). According to Osayi (2013), recidivism has not only been on the increase in Sub-Saharan Africa, but has become a major social problem affecting Nigeria as a whole. Efforts have been made by different researchers to offer explanation on factors that could be responsible for the increase in the rate of recidivism, but most effort proves abortive. The increase in incarceration over the past few decades as a result of fragmented homes (Hipp et al., 2009; Lynch & Sabol 2004) has generated a substantial amount of research aimed at gaining insight into why ex-prisoners recidivate. Individual correlates of recidivism include prior convictions, adverse childhood experiences, fragmented homes, and high levels of parole supervision (Clarke, et al., 1988; Listwan et al., 2003; De Li & MacKenzie MacKenzie 2002). Coupled with mass incarceration is a corresponding increase in prisoner being released from prison and returning to the society. In separate report by the Florida Department of Corrections (2014), it is stated that factors that predispose criminals to re-offend include drug abuse, criminal history educational level, and lack of stable marriage.

Today, the Nigerian correctional Centre is assigned the onerous responsibility of ensuring the safe custody of offenders as well as their reformation and rehabilitation. According to Igbo (1999), carefully designed and well-articulated administrative, reformatory and rehabilitative programs aimed at inculcating discipline, respect for law and order, and the dignity of honest labor. Despite the philosophical change on the rationale of imprisonment from that which is wholly punishment orientated to that which lays more emphasis on reformation and rehabilitation which makes life of crime undesirable to these offenders upon release into the society, the rate of return of ex-convicts to correctional Centre (recidivists) presents an uncomfortable figure. In 2010, the total number of recidivist among inmates in Nigeria was 42.8% (Nigeria Correctional Service, Annual Report, 2010). Similarly, in 2012, out of 36,309

inmates, 14,310 were recidivists, an increasing rate of re-offending approximately was 1.6% monthly (Nigeria Correctional Service, Annual Reports, 2012). Recidivism is an act of persistently going back to a life of crime. Recidivism, in a criminal justice context, is the reversion of an individual to criminal behavior after he or she has been convicted of a prior offense, sentenced, and (presumably) corrected (Maltz, 1981). Thus, a recidivist is that person who is prone to crime commission, and is consistently imprisoned.

Statement of the Problem

Recidivism has not only been on the increase in Africa, but has become a major social problem to the society, government, multinational humanitarian organizations and the world over (Osayi, 2013). There are many factors that encouraged many prisoner's involvements in recidivism. These factors range from unstable employment, stigmatization and unfriendly attitude received from the members of the society, lack of parental care or the problems of youth raised by relatives rather than their biological parents. According to Abrifor (2010), estimated prevalence of recidivism in Nigeria custodial centers stood at 52.4% in 2010. Since then, there has not been any sign that the criminal tendency has dropped. Similarly, Wilson (2009) stated that Nigeria have acknowledged that 81% of male criminal inmate and 45% of female criminal inmate were re-arrested within 36 months of release from the custodial Centre. As a result of this, crime by ex-inmates account for a significant part of current and future crimes (Abrifor et al., 2012). However, since the inception of correctional custodial centers in Nigeria, so much has been said about the rehabilitation and recidivism, and the neglect that characterized rehabilitation process which has led the high rate of ex-convicts returning to crime (Obioha 2011). The high prevalence of recidivism has both consequences and implications for both social and economic growth.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine if fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences predicts recidivism among inmates. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the extent to which fragmented homes significantly predict recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center.
- ii. Determine the extent to which adverse childhood experiences significantly predict recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center.
- iii. Assess the joint predictive influence of fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences on recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Strain Theory

The strain theory is also known Anomie theory it was developed by Robert Merton (2003). Merton emphasizes social factors as causes of crime and deviance. Merton's views are of particular relevance to this research as social factors are focal area of this study. Anomie or strain theory, explains the differential rates of deviance across groups, space and time. Criminologists who espouse the anomie or strain theory argue that crimes are due to disjuncture between culturally prescribed success goals and access to institutional means of attaining these goals (Alemika 2012). According to the original proponent, Merton, societies define the goals that every citizen ought to pursue and attain, but the means of doing so are structured (regulated and restricted) such that only a fraction of the members of the society could attain the goals prescribed for every one by the normative system.

Psychodynamic Theory of Crime

The psychodynamic theory is largely based on the groundbreaking ideas of Sigmund Freud. The psychodynamic theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for this paper. It is sufficient to note that Freud thought that human behavior, including violent behavior, was the product of "unconscious" forces operating within a person's mind. Freud also felt that early

childhood experiences had a profound impact on adolescent and adult behavior. Freud, for example, believed that conflicts that occur at various psychosexual stages of development might impact an individual's ability to operate normally as an adult (Bartol, 2002). For Freud, aggression was thus a basic (id based) human impulse that is repressed in well-adjusted people who have experienced a normal childhood. However, if the aggressive impulse is not controlled, or is repressed to an unusual degree, some aggression can "leak out" of the unconscious and a person can engage in random acts of violence. Freud referred to this as "displaced aggression" (Englander, 2007; Bartol, 2002). It is interesting to note that Freud himself did not theorize much about crime or violence. The psychoanalyst who is perhaps most closely associated with the study of criminality is August Aichorn. Unlike many of the psychologists of his days, Aichorn felt that exposure to stressful social environments did not automatically produce crime or violence. After all, most people are exposed to extreme stress and do not engage in serious forms of criminality.

Social Support Theory

Social support is defined as the emotional and instrumental resources that are provided by the family (Cullen et al., 1999). Emotional support includes expressions of encouragement, acceptance, empathy, comfort, and love, which has the potential to stimulate internal motivation that is important for successful reentry (Breese et al., 2000, Giordano et al. Maruna, 2001; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). Instrumental support includes providing individuals with tangible resources such as a place to live, financial assistance, employment opportunities, and transportation. Such support is also required for successful reentry (Christian & Martinez 2009; La Vigne et al., 2004;). Cullen (1994) is largely credited for developing the concept of social support. His model consisted of three propositions when discussing its significance. First, he asserted based on early works of literature that higher rates of crime and delinquency are due to low levels of social support. Second, he hypothesized that a relationship existed between decreased levels of social support and higher crime rates in a community, and that increased levels of social support decreases the likelihood of criminal involvement. Lastly, he expressed that social support encourages people to comprehend what is right and what constitutes a "good society". In American criminology specifically, there has been interest in the criminogenic effects of family life since this structure is deemed as significant and the pathway to adult criminality starts in childhood and adolescence (Sampson & Laub, 2005). The notion of social support is predominantly rooted in ideas advanced by the Chicago school (Cullen, 1999).

Summary

This literature review highlights the profound impact of broken homes on inmate's moral behavior and educational outcomes. It reveals that inmates from broken homes are more likely to engage in negative behaviors such as stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and poor academic performance. Emotional distress stemming from family instability further exacerbates these issues. Although the number of delinquency cases that involved youth charged with criminal law violations has fallen 44% from 1997 to 2013, juvenile offending still remains an issue nationwide (Furdella & Puzanchera, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design. Quantitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to describe phenomena, test hypotheses, and examine relationships among variables. It is grounded in the positivist paradigm, which assumes that reality can be observed, measured objectively, and expressed numerically. This quantitative design is appropriate for the present study because it allows for objective measurement of variables and the use of statistical tools to draw reliable conclusions.

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consists of inmates in Keffi Medium Custodial Correctional Center. The entire population in Keffi Medium Correctional Center was seven hundred (700) inmates. The Convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants because the participants choose to participate on their own convenience not by duress or coercion. The use of convenience sampling was employed because of the need to ensure voluntary participation free from coercion in a custodial setting, alongside practical constraints of institutional access, while the application of the Krejcie and Morgan formula ensured the sample size remained statistically adequate for the quantitative analysis. However, for the purpose of this research, Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula was used to determine the study sample size. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table provides a statistically valid method for determining the sample size (**s**) for a given population (**N**).

Methods of Data Collection

The pilot study was conducted with a sample of 30 participants drawn from a population similar to the target population but not included in the main study to establish the reliability of the three research instruments. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEQ), adapted from the CDC and Kaiser Permanente, consists of 10 items scored on a dichotomous true or false format and yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70, which falls within the acceptable range and confirms adequate internal consistency. The Broken Home Inventory (BHI), developed by Schultz (2013), comprises of 20 items scored on a five-point Likert scale and produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81, aligning closely with the original reliability coefficient of 0.79 and indicating high internal consistency for measuring fragmented home experiences. The Statistical Information on Recidivism-Revised 1 (SIR-R1), developed by Lawrence (2002), consists of 35 items scored on a three-point scale and yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, consistent with the original scale's reliability properties and affirming its robustness for assessing recidivism risk. According to Spiegel (1992), an instrument is considered reliable when its coefficient approaches 1, and the coefficients obtained across all three instruments ranging from 0.70 to 0.84 confirm that the instruments are reliable and suitable for use in the main study.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEQ)

This instrument was used to determine the participants' levels of adverse childhood experiences. ACEs were measured using a binary (true or false) response format for 10 questions and then summed up in order to create the score used in the analysis. The standard 10-item ACE questionnaire developed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kaiser Permanente study was adapted for this research. The ACE questionnaire contains items that measure exposure to adversity in childhood across three major domains: Abuse, Neglect and Household dysfunction. Responses to each item are dichotomous, recorded as true (1) or false (0). The total ACE score ranges from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater exposure to childhood adversity. A reliability coefficient of 0.70. The obtained coefficient indicated that the instrument was reliable and suitable for use in the study.

Broken Home Inventory (BHI)

Broken Home Inventory (BHI) was developed by Schultz (2013) to measure students with broken homes problems. This instrument consist of 20 items. The Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.79, and the re measuring reliability was 0.84 the scale was scored on a five-point Likert (SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree). The data obtained from the pilot study, was statistically analyzed for the purpose of reliability. The result of Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient of broken home scale is 0.81,

Statistical Information on Recidivism- Revised 1(SIR-R1)

Statistical information on recidivism- revised 1(SIR-R1) was developed by Lawrence (2002). It was used as a convergent analysis to ensure that the scale has some similarity with other scales that measure the same construct. The 35-Item Recidivism Scale is a structured risk assessment tool developed to measure the likelihood of reoffending among offenders. The instrument consists of 35 items covering the following. Criminal history and Family background. Each item is scored on a dichotomous scale based on Likert-type responses, ranging from Disagree (1), Not Sure (2) and Agree (3). Total scores range from 0 to 35, with higher scores indicating a higher risk of recidivism. The first reliability test showed a Cronbach alpha of 0.84 and the test re-test showed a Cronbach of 0.81.

Techniques for Data Analysis

Regression Analysis to determine the predictive strength of Adverse Childhood Experiences and fragmented home on recidivism. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test hypothesis one and hypothesis two, while Multiple regression analysis was used to test hypothesis three, at 0.05 level of significance. Lastly, the data was analyzed using (SPSS) statistical packages for the social science, via tables, frequency and percentage was adopted.

Ethical Considerations

1. Approval was obtained from the authorities of Keffi Correctional Custodian Centre, Nasarawa State, Nigeria
2. Informed consent from participants was obtained as participation was voluntary
3. Anonymity and confidentiality maintained
4. The researcher gave assurance to the Correctional authority on feedback from the outcome of the study

RESULTS

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demography	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	156	67.2
	Female	76	32.8
	Total	232	100.0
Age	18–23 years	44	19.0
	24–29 years	68	29.3
	30–35 years	56	24.1
	36–41 years	38	16.4
	42 years and above	26	11.2
	Total	232	100.0
Marital Status	Married	102	44.0
	Single	130	56.0
	Total	232	100.0
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	118	50.9
	Islam	94	40.5
	Others	20	8.6
	Total	232	100.0
Educational Qualification	Primary	28	12.1
	Secondary	82	35.3
	Tertiary	106	45.7
	None	16	6.9
	Total	232	100.0

As presented in Table 1, the demographic characteristics show that the majority of respondents were male (67.2%), while females accounted for 32.8% of the total sample.

The age distribution indicates that most respondents fall within the 24–29 years (29.3%) and 30–35 years (24.1%) categories

Hypothesis One

There will be a significant prediction of fragmented homes on recidivism among inmates of Keffi correctional centre. This hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis as presented in Table.2

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis on the significant prediction of fragmented homes on recidivism among inmates of Keffi correctional centre

DV	Predator	R	R ²	F	df	95%CI	β	T	P
Recidivism	Constant	.348	.121	44.544	1,230				
	Fragmented Homes					[0.907,1.666]	.348	6.674	.000

Hypothesis Two

There will be a significant prediction of adverse childhood experiences on recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center. This hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis as presented in Table.3

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis on the significant prediction of adverse childhood experiences on recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center

DV	Predator	R	R ²	F	Df	95%CI	β	T	P
Recidivism	Constant	.223	.050	16.877	1,230				
	ACE					[-1.920, -.677]	-.223	-4.108	.000

Hypothesis Three

Fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences will have a significant joint prediction on recidivism among inmates of Keffi correctional center. This hypothesis was tested using multiple linear regression, and the result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of multiple regression analysis on Fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences will have a significant joint prediction on recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center

DV	Predator	R	R ²	F	Df	95%CI	B	T	p
Recidivism	Constant	.620	.384	116.659	2,229				
	Fragmented homes					[0.138,0.585]	.129	3.177	.002
	ACE					[1.122,1.468]	.598	14.722	.000

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research hypotheses, empirical literature, and theoretical frameworks, Strain Theory, Psychodynamic Theory, and Social Support Theory. The purpose is to interpret how fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) predict recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Centre.

There will be a significant prediction of fragmented homes on recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Center. The result of the simple regression analysis revealed that fragmented homes significantly predicted recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Centres ($R = .348$, $R^2 = .121$, $F(1,230) = 44.544$, $p < .001$). This implies that inmates who come from fragmented or unstable homes are more likely to reoffend compared to those from stable family backgrounds. This finding agrees with several empirical studies that established that family instability is a major precursor of antisocial and deviant behaviour. Ajika et al. (2012) found that individuals from broken homes exhibit more maladaptive behaviours than those from stable families. Similarly, Ayodele (2006) and Roehlkepartain (2003) and emphasized that the family serves as the primary agent of socialization, and any disruption within it leads to weak emotional

control and poor value internalization, increasing the likelihood of reoffending. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), which posits that individuals who experience disorganization or dysfunction within their social environment, such as fragmented homes, are more likely to resort to deviant behaviours to cope with the resulting strain. Offenders from such backgrounds may experience frustration, economic hardship, or lack of legitimate opportunities, prompting them to re-engage in crime after incarceration. Likewise, Social Support Theory reinforces this explanation by asserting that individuals who lack emotional, psychological, and moral support from family and community networks are more vulnerable to deviant acts. A fragmented home deprives individuals of essential support structures that could deter reoffending, thereby predisposing them to recidivism.

. The result of the second hypothesis revealed a significant prediction of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on recidivism ($R = .223$, $R^2 = .050$, $F(1,230) = 16.877$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.223$, $t = -4.108$). This implies that inmates who were exposed to traumatic experiences such as abuse, neglect, or parental absence during childhood are more likely to reoffend after release. This result is consistent with earlier empirical evidence. Felitti et al. (1996) demonstrated that adverse childhood experiences are strongly correlated with behavioural and emotional dysfunctions in adulthood. Hence, the high rate of recidivism among inmates with histories of childhood adversity in this study can be attributed to unresolved psychological trauma and emotional instability stemming from their early environment. Furthermore, within the framework of Strain Theory, ACEs can be understood as early sources of strain that frustrate personal aspirations and moral development. The lack of legitimate means to cope with these frustrations often results in deviant adaptations, including reoffending.

The result of the multiple regression analysis revealed that fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences jointly predicted recidivism significantly ($R = .620$, $R^2 = .384$, $F(2,229) = 116.659$, $p < .001$). Together, they accounted for 38.4% of the variance in recidivism among inmates. While both predictors were significant, ACEs had a stronger predictive effect ($\beta = .598$, $p < .001$) than fragmented homes ($\beta = .129$, $p = .002$). This suggests that although family fragmentation contributes to criminal relapse, adverse childhood experiences have a more dominant influence on reoffending. This finding agrees with the empirical reviews of Wolff et al. (2018) and Jacobs et al. (2020), who found that the interaction between early-life trauma and family instability increases the likelihood of repeated incarceration. Additionally, Strain Theory complements this explanation by asserting that social and psychological strains arising from early-life adversity and family disorganization push individuals toward deviant coping patterns. Offenders from such environments experience accumulated frustration, leading to emotional instability and increased criminal persistence. Similarly, Psychodynamic Theory provides insight into how unresolved childhood trauma and weak ego control can drive repetitive criminal behaviour, as individuals unconsciously seek outlets for repressed anger or deprivation.

Recommendations

Based on the finding that fragmented homes significantly predict recidivism among inmates of Keffi Correctional Centre, it is recommended that correctional programs incorporate family-based rehabilitation initiatives. The Nigeria Correctional Service, in partnership with social welfare agencies, should establish family counselling and reintegration units that help restore emotional bonds between inmates and their families. Such programs should include parenting workshops, family visits, and reconciliation sessions designed to strengthen communication and support systems. By addressing family instability and restoring social ties, the likelihood of emotional strain and subsequent reoffending can be reduced.

Since the study revealed that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) significantly predict recidivism, correctional institutions should adopt trauma-informed rehabilitation strategies. Professional counsellors, psychologists, and social workers should be employed to identify inmates with histories of abuse, neglect, or exposure to violence and provide appropriate psychological interventions. These may include cognitive-behavioural therapy, group counselling, and anger management programs to help inmates process unresolved trauma.

Addressing the deep-seated psychological distress associated with ACEs will foster emotional healing, reduce aggression, and enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs within correctional facilities.

Given the joint influence of fragmented homes and ACEs on recidivism, it is recommended that the government and relevant stakeholders develop community-based reintegration and support systems for ex-offenders. Such programs should involve mentorship initiatives, vocational and skill acquisition training, and continuous psychosocial support to promote social reintegration. Community and faith-based organizations should be encouraged to collaborate with correctional institutions to provide guidance, employment opportunities, and social belonging. Strengthening post-release social support aligns with the Social Support Theory, ensuring that ex-offenders have the emotional, economic, and relational stability required to prevent reoffending and sustain a crime-free life.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of this study was the restricted access to participants within the correctional environment. Due to institutional regulations and security protocols, the researcher was only able to interact with a limited number of inmates at specific times. This constraint may have influenced the depth of responses obtained and limited the extent to which participants could freely express their experiences, especially concerning sensitive issues such as family background and childhood trauma.

Another limitation was the use of self-reported data, which may be affected by social desirability bias and memory distortion. Some inmates may have underreported or exaggerated aspects of their family history or adverse childhood experiences due to fear of judgment or misunderstanding of the questions. Although anonymity was ensured to encourage honest responses, the possibility of response bias cannot be entirely ruled out, which may have affected the precision of the findings.

Finally, the study was limited to one correctional center, Keffi Correctional Center, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other correctional facilities across Nigeria. Differences in institutional policies, inmate demographics, and regional socioeconomic conditions might produce varied outcomes elsewhere. Future research should therefore include multiple correctional institutions across different states to provide a more comprehensive and comparative understanding of how fragmented homes and adverse childhood experiences influence recidivism.

Significance of the Study

This research highlights the prevalence and causes of recidivism, such as ACEs and fragmented homes, in the view of the correctional facilities and programs in Keffi prisons. Apart from reducing crime rate and recidivism, the study advocates for practical and conscientious positive actions towards reducing the increasing rate of recidivism in the Nigeria society especially in Keffi Correctional Centre. Moreover, this research also draws the attention of readers to the fact that majority of recidivists in Keffi correctional Centre are youths. This has an effect on our growth and developments as a nation because these youths are within the ages of (19-31) and they are at their productive stage. This study also came up with recommendations that will have practical implications in government policies which will see the need to address the root causes of recidivism and provide adequate measures in mitigating it. It also strives to highlight the internal causes of recidivism by critically examining the correctional measures in place that might help reduce the rate of recidivism. The study's findings can inform future research on the intersection of ACEs, fragmented homes, and recidivism, leading to a deeper understanding of these complex issues.

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