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**FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR RECIDIVISM AMONG PRISON INMATES IN RIVERS
STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated factors responsible for recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State, Nigeria. Descriptive design was adopted for the study. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. The population of the study was 2071 prison inmates from which a sample of 543 prison inmates was selected through stratified random sampling method. An instrument titled "Prison Recidivists Scale" (PRS) was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results obtained among others are that; gender, level of education and marital status significantly influence recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State. Based on the results, recommendations were made among which is that prison authorities should take urgent steps to incorporate the different socialization processes for prison inmates into orientation programmes, etc.

Key Words: Factors, recidivism, prison, inmates, Rivers State

Introduction

Recidivism is one of the most fundamental concepts in criminal justice. It refers to a person's relapse into criminal behaviour often after receiving sanctions or undergoing interventions for a previous crime. Prison recidivism is the relapse into criminal activities which is generally measured by a former prisoner's return to prison for a new offence (Baum, 2005).

Recidivism is derived from Latin word *recidivus* "recurring", meaning the act of a person repeating an undesirable behaviour after he has either experienced negative consequences of that behaviour, or have been treated to extinguish the behaviour. It is also used to refer to the percentage of former prisoners who are rearrested" (James, 2008).

Recidivism is most frequently used in conjunction with criminal behaviour and substance abuse (often synonymous with relapse more commonly used in medicine and in the disease models of addiction). For example, scientific literature may refer to the recidivism of sexual offenders, meaning the frequency with which they are detected or apprehended committing additional sexual crimes after being released from prison for similar crimes (James, 2008).

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Rates of recidivism reflect the degree to which released inmates have been rehabilitated and the role correctional programmes play in the reintegration of prisoners into society. The rate of recidivism in Nigeria is estimated to be one-fifth; which means that one out of every five released inmates will be re-incarcerated (Nigeria Prison Services Reports, 2011). Recidivism has become a big problem in our prison systems. It has been estimated that about 20% of prisoners who are released are sent back to jails (Nigeria Prison Services Reports, 2011). It has been suggested that for many decades, correctional programmes and its implementers have not given priority to the reality that offenders who re-enter society face varied/assortment of daunting challenges that predictably lead to high rate of recidivism. This is so because ex-convicts are stripped of every civil rights and are reluctantly absorbed into communities, which leads to isolation and alienation.

In order to improve criminal justice policy with regards to recidivism, there must be an examination on the causes of the high rate of recidivism and why prisons become a “revolving” door for many individuals. With a recidivism rate of approximately twenty per cent (20%), the researcher considers the possibility that factors such as gender, educational qualification, unemployment, home environment (family type) as well as reformation programmes of government for inmates may be responsible for the problem.

When prisoners are released, they are not prepared to deal with the realities that await them outside the prison walls. A typical offender leaves prison without any savings, no entitlement to employment benefits and very few employment opportunities. In 2009, the Nigeria Prison Services Report has it that seven out of ten prison inmates function on very low or no educational qualification, which means that they are unable to fill out job application, read a bus schedule or direction or calculate a price discount on goods and services where available. Prisoners are often released with only a small amount of cash for transportation and perhaps phone calls to relations to come to pick them up (John-Bull, 2011). It is thus up to them to choose a place to live, to buy basic foods and services and find a job.

Owners of businesses will often refuse to hire a convicted felon and are at best hesitant, especially in any position that entails even minor responsibility or the handling of money (note that this includes most work), especially those convicted of thievery, larceny, or drug addicts (Visher, 2003). Many leasing corporations (those organizations and or people who own and rent apartments) now routinely perform criminal background checks and disqualify ex-convicts. Even when they (ex-prisoners) have money to pay for an apartment they often get those that are held in the name of “a someone” other than the occupant without a felony records.

People with criminal records or ex-convicts report difficulty or the inability to find educational opportunities, and are often denied financial aid based on their records. In America for example, those found guilty of even a minor misdemeanour (in some states, a citation offense, such as traffic ticket) or misdemeanour drug offense (for example, simple possession of marijuana or heroin respectively) are disqualified from receiving all government funded educational loans and financial aid (Bailey, 2009). This above mentioned scenario in America is also true of Nigeria where very few opportunities are bound for people without criminal records so for the ex-convicts it is totally unavailable in the researcher’s opinion.

Most often than not ex-convicts find they right back in jail because it is very difficult for them to fit back in with ‘normal’ life. They find it difficult to re-establish ties with

Their families, return to high-risk place and secure formal identification; they often have a poor work history and now have a criminal record to deal with. Many prisoners report being anxious about their release; they are excited about how their life will be different “this time” which does not always end up being the case (Visher, 2003). Without the tools to build a successful life and with the stress of trying to make ends meet, many prisoners resort to life of crime. While some ex-convicts resort to life of crime for survival, others see crime and prison as a normal way of life; this category is known as the criminal psychopaths. This is defined as a personality disorder characterized by an abnormal lack of empathy combined with intensely amoral conduct. Psychopaths have an un-canning ability to appear outwardly normal, they generally have an uninhibited gratification in criminal, sexual, or aggressive impulses and the inability to learn from past mistakes (Grant, Rice, Marnie & Harris, 2006). This set of ex-convicts even though is part of the general population under investigation, will not have much emphasis placed on them as their case is more of mental/medical than social phenomenon.

Society’s current approach to combating crime/criminal activities is to get tough on crime and criminals. This approach has even proven to be ineffective in reducing recidivism. Prisoners are re-entering the prison system with even more problems than prisoners of prior years. The normalcy of prison life impedes socialization and the effectiveness of using prison as a crime deterrent only lead to higher crime rates and victimization when offenders re-enter communities (Anyamaobi, 2007). According to Anuonyeh (2006) recidivism cannot be reduced simply by harsher prison sentences as is applicable in Nigeria. The idea of longer prison sentences as crime deterrent does not help to reduce recidivism but only makes adjustment to society more problematic upon release for ex-convicts. It becomes more difficult to obtain employment and offenders become more alienated from their families and communities. Offenders may also experience the long term effects of preconsation, which is also referred to as prison socialization. This prison subculture is characterized by the fear of other inmates, socializing with those who have criminal orientation, being hostile towards staff members and increased rage based on aggressive treatment (Mbuba, 2004). Often the result of preconsation and adaptation to long term imprisonment according to (Kenny, 2004) only leads to depression, anxiety, and mental breakdowns. As more and more tax payer’s money go to correctional budgets, public opinion and public policy increasingly are demanding that prisons expand programmes that not only educate, inform, orientate but also prepare inmates to re-entry into normal community life and work place.

Giving proper attention to the rate ex-convicts recidivism is an important avenue of monitoring or evaluating the success or otherwise of government’s programmes and policies on rehabilitation and reformation of prison inmates. In so doing the traditional role of prison as a place where offenders are confined and punished with a view to correcting abnormal behaviour would have expanded to include a place of formal education (where inmates can obtain first and second degrees if desired), skill acquisition (learn such trade as hair dressing, carpentry, mechanics, crop/animal farming, etc.), behaviour modification (through counselling) for self-actualization. This in the researcher’s opinion will provide prison inmates the opportunity to change behaviours associated with crime and learn more positive and productive ones.

Success in reducing recidivism can translate into improvement in public safety, decongestion of prisons and reintegration of former inmates into their families, labour force and community life in general. However, this success can only be achieved if proper attention

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is paid to ascertaining factors responsible for recidivism among prison inmates and evaluating the reformation programmes of government and perhaps look at how counselling can be used as part of the tools of the reformation and rehabilitation process of prison inmates.

Empirical Literature Review

Research has consistently found that higher levels of education correlated strongly with lower levels of crime (Florida Department of Education, 2006). Currently, the average level of education for incarcerated males over the age of 18 is 8th grade. This means the average incarcerated male can read, write and do arithmetic at the same level as a 13 year old boy. Of the 41% of prisoners who did continue their education beyond the 8th grade, 53% of Hispanics, 44% at Black and 27% of white inmates failed to graduate from high school or obtain a GED (Educational Testing Centre, 2006). These individuals failed to create a strong academic and personal developmental foundation which has made them more susceptible to criminal behaviour. Their ability to utilize logic and reason has been dwarfed by their lack of education, making it difficult for them to formulate informed decisions (Arum & Beattic, 2000).

Research has shown that inmate exposed to education and educational programs while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates than those with no educational exposure (Educational Testing Centre, 2006). Those inmates who participated in education classes while in prison showed a 5% decreased in recidivism rates, as compared to those who did not participate (Aos, Miller & Drake, 2004). Education is not simply confining a person into a classroom for eight hours a day, five days a week. Durand (2006) explained that education comes in many forms, and needs to be created to benefit the participants. According to him, the current types of programs being used in prisons are educational, vocational, and prison industry. These classes are structured to assist the prisoners with their social skills, artistic development, techniques and strategies to help them deal with their emotions. They are intended to educate and inform the inmate while increasing self-esteem and promote positive relationship building skills, with the focus being rehabilitation and crime deterrent.

Along with that, each class puts an emphasis on a specific subject. For example, educational programs typically consist of adult basic education classes, high school or general education degree (GED) classes and post-secondary classes. Those participating in these classes want to obtain skills needed in order to possess a high school diploma, GED or a post-secondary degree (Coley & Barton, 2006). Vocational training classes typically consist of skills development in a particular trade or industry, such as carpentry, auto detailing, electrical servicing or welding. Those participating in these classes are acquiring a specific skill that they can use to find a job once they have finished their sentence (Visher, 2003). Prison industry programs focus particularly on the prison industry itself and on trades within that industry. Those participating in these classes will obtain skills that can be used while incarcerated such as laundry detail, food service, license plate manufacturing, and general maintenance (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2007).

Finally, employment programs typically focus on providing assistance in how to obtain and maintain employment, including job interview skills, resume writing and workplace habits. Participants in these classes generally have a high school education and are serving shorter sentences (Lawrence, Mears, Dutin & Travis, 2002). Each education class has the difficult task of condensing what would normally be conveyed during a four year high school education, into a six to eight week course. Of all the programs offered, current research demonstrates that

vocational education programs are the most effective in reducing the recidivism of offenders (Mackenzie, 2000). This can be attributed to the high interest by inmates. It could also be a reflection of the inmates' disdain towards education and the negative effect it has had on the inmates during their earlier years. Whatever the reason, this data demonstrates that education has an influence on both crime and recidivism rates (Coley & Barton, 2006). Those who have an adequate academic foundation are less likely to engage in criminal activity and those who participate in these programs while incarcerated have a higher chance of staying out of prison. They have also gained the skills needed to obtain a job which will increase their self-esteem, create more opportunities and will allow them to be an active member of their community (Vacca, 2004).

Individuals, who engage in criminal activities and become incarcerated often come from an inadequate family system with poor family functioning and processes (Garbarino & Sherman, 2000). Families such as these often have a difficult time adapting and have low levels of cohesion. Lack of adaptation among a family unit often leads to poor communication which can result in inappropriate assertiveness, lack of problem-solving skills, and decreased use of reasoning. Lack of cohesion among a family unit typically results in family members competing for limited resources, inappropriate emotional responses and social withdrawal (Kinane, 2004). Poor family functioning may be attributed to the absence of a parent due to incarceration, addition, abuse mental illness or death. Children who grow up in families where the father is incarcerated are five to six times more likely to be incarcerated than those whose parents were not incarcerated (Carney & Buttel, 2003).

Growing up with an absent parent can be extremely devastating to a child, and their feelings of anger and sadness are often internalized and can manifest in delinquent behaviour (Turner, 2004). Children and adolescents have trouble expressing themselves with words, so they use actions such as truancy, gang affiliation, and criminal activity, drug use, running away and becoming increasingly defiant. This behaviour puts these children at a higher risk of experiencing more stranger and non-stranger victimization, such as sexual assault, maltreatment and witnessing family violence (Patterson, 2002). The single parent who is raising the child is often forced to work long hours in order to support the family financially and is not aware of their child's behaviour and cannot advocate or protect them effectively. Also, the child frequently comes home from school to an empty house and is forced to provide for himself/herself by making his/her own meals or cleaning his/her laundry at an early age, for example. This behaviour can give the child a false sense of independence believing he/she do not need anyone to help him/her, while also engendering feelings of isolation as they do not have an adequate parental role model to relate to. If the child does not witness healthy parental modelling behaviour they will be unable to interact with others appropriately which can lead to establishing poor boundaries with others and an inability to relate positively with others (Canetti, Bachar & Galili-Weisstb, 1997). A lack of attachment between the parent and child can also develop which can result in a child's inability to attach to others. Without an attachment to others, the child is more likely to engage in criminal behaviour (Canetti, et al, 1997).

According to Garbarino and Sherman (2000), along with attachment to a parent, the interactions of the family as a whole system are equally important. To them, the interaction patterns among family members in a poor functioning family are developmentally destructive,

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creating a socially and psychologically damaging climate. This climate fosters poor communication skills and inability to establish trust and reliability. The children learn they cannot trust the adults around them and become more and more isolated from family members. These dysfunctional family relationships are then replicated outside of the family with non-family members such as peers and classmates (Klein, Alexander & Parsons, 2007). If a person fails to learn to bond with family members, does not learn effective communications, does not empathize with others or has trouble connecting with family members, they will then create the same types of relationships with others. These relationships are often found with people of similar backgrounds, forged by unhealthy bonds and resulting in the creation of a new family system that is just as dysfunctional where the focus is on the deficits of the group, instead of the strengths. It is during this time where young people are most vulnerable to criminal activity due to lack of parental supervision, unmet needs and pressure from their peers. (McLanbhan & Booth, 2009).

Family acceptance and encouragement is also directly related to an ex-convicts successful re-entry (Naser & Visser, 2006). Often time see a person's incarceration brings their family shame, and it is difficult to overcome that. In society's opinion, incarceration is considered taboo and seldom elicits sympathy and support from others. This type of reaction not only forces the family to deal with the separation on their own, but also influences their willingness to visit their family members while in jail, or welcome them back into the home after release (Schopenhauer, 2006). Inmates whose families have overcome this stigma, as displayed by jail house visitations, letters, packages and a willingness to accept them back after their time is served, have a greater re-entry success family ties have to locate stability and support elsewhere. Some return to their friends they associated with before incarceration, while others live on the streets and become more and more isolated. For those who have spent a majority of their life behind bars, they may feel the only safe place for them is prison. Others may be rearrested because they do not have the skills needed to successfully function in mainstream society (Naser & Visser, 2006).

With a recidivism rate of approximately sixty-six per cent, we consider the possibility that prison exacerbates the problem. When prisoners are released they are not prepared to deal with the outside world (Ceji, 2007). A typical offender, according to Donzeiger (1997) leaves prison without any savings, no entitlement to unemployment benefits, and very few employment opportunities.

There were 2, 293, 157 prisoners held in federal and local prisons according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in 2007 and in some circumstances incarceration becomes a normal state of living (BJS, 2008). The normalcy of prison life impedes socialization and the effectiveness of using prison as a deterrent. This leads to higher crime rates and victimization when these offenders re-enter communities (Donzeiger, 2007). For these reasons, rehabilitative services are solely needed, as recidivism is not reduced simply by harsher sentencing. The effects of harsher prison sentences can even increase the chances of recidivism, which was demonstrated in a recent research study, in Canada;

The overall findings showed that harsher criminal justice sanctions had no deterrent effect on recidivism. On the contrary, punishment produced a slight (3 present) increase in recidivism. These findings were consistent across subgroups of offenders (adult/youth, male/female, white/minority) (Mckean and Ransford, 2004:14)

In addition longer prison sentences only make adjustment to society more problematic upon release. It becomes increasingly more difficult to obtain employment and offenders

become alienated from their families and the community. Offenders may also experience the long-term effects of preconsolidation, which is also referred to as prison socialization. This prison sub-culture is characterized by the fear of other inmates, socializing with those who have criminal orientation, being hostile towards staff members and increased rage based on aggressive treatment (Howells, 2000). Often the results of preconsolidation and adaptation to long-term imprisonment can lead to depression, anxiety and mental breakdowns (Frolander & Yates, 2005).

In some instances, inmates endure abuse and end up in solitary confinement for bad behaviour, which only breeds rage. For example, in a high-security prison in Washington, an inmate was stripped naked, placed in full mechanical restraints, and was locked in a quiet cell with the lights on for 24 hours a day. In addition, he was not permitted to exercise outside of his cell for 5 years (Donziger, 2007). Abuses such as these make inmates more hostile and fitter towards society, which arguably increases the rate of recidivism.

Howells (2000) explained that the prison atmosphere is survival of-the fittest, where one cannot show vulnerability. According to him, some inmates even learn more about crime in the prison than outside. The general population is being protected by the prison system because these criminals cannot commit crimes in the outside world while they are in prison. Ultimately, this protection is temporary and misleading since upon the prisoners' release their violent and enraged attitude will be mainstreamed into society at large.

The prevalence of female offenders is between 8% and 18.3% depending on the studies in industrialized countries (Bonta, Pan & Wallace – Capretta, 2005) and is low, relative to male offenders (Stuart & Brice-Baker, 2004). Only little research is available on recidivism by female offenders and “what works is mainly” what works with male offenders (Salomone, 2004).

The general criminology perspective views the factors responsible for female crime as essentially the same as those for male crime. Farrington and Painter (2004) researched whether risk factors for offending differed for males and females, by examining the brothers and sisters of males included in the Cambridge study in Delinquent Development. They concluded that the following most important risk factors are similar for brothers and sisters; low family income, large family size, attending a high delinquency rate school, a convicted father, a convicted mother, a delinquent sibling, parental conflict, separation from a parent, harsh or erratic parental discipline and poor parental supervision.

According to Loucks and Zamble (2003), psychopathy is an important role in the prediction of general offending in female serious offenders as it is serious in male offenders. Weizmann-Henelius, Viemero and Eronene (2004) comment on the minor attention given to risk factors related to violent behaviour in women; women commit fewer crimes than men, especially violent crimes, often in domestic situations. Lending credence to the above, Onyejiaku in Iwundu (2007) stated that over the years, there have been marked differences between males and females in the scope and rate of delinquent behaviours. According to him, boys are involved in delinquent acts five times as often as girls. In a study on juvenile recidivism conducted in United States of America, Mbuba (2004) found that males were more likely to be rearrested than females. Among the rearrested probationers, 84 per cent were males and 16 per cent females compared to 74 per cent males and 26 per cent females among those probationers not rearrested.

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Alder and Bazemore (2009) identified two risk factors with female offenders; the number of prior incarceration is and a history of drug dependency. They concluded that if predictive instruments have not been validated for female offenders separate guideline should be adopted. The authors queried whether the parole guidelines used with offenders applied to female offenders. If male and female subpopulations significantly differ with regard to offense related behaviour, items that predict parole failure accurately for male populations may exhibit serious deficiencies when applied to women offenders. They concluded that there are differences between men and women in type of offences, severity, number of prior prison sentences, age at admission, etc. They further stated that biases could lead to over prediction of recidivism in females when prediction instruments are validated on male data and appear to yield a high percentage for females (the prediction that a female offender will recidivate while she would have been successful if released) and the fact that cut off scores may differ.

In a report by Florida Department of Corrections (2003), it was found that marital status significantly influenced involvement in crimes. According to the report, the number of married people involved in crimes is less compared to their unmarried counterpart. Mbuba (2004) found that married people differ from unmarried people in terms of crime rate. According to him, those who are not married commit more crimes than those who are married. Reasons perhaps, could be as a result of the responsibility that comes with marriage as an institution.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. The population of this study comprised all reconvicted prison inmates in Rivers State prisons totalling 2,071. The sample of this study comprised 543 prison recidivists selected from the four prisons in Rivers State. Each of the prisons was treated as a cluster; then stratified random sampling was employed to draw the sample size. The stratification was done according to gender, marital status educational qualification, and family type.

An instrument named “Prison Recidivists’ Scale” (PRS) was used by the researcher for data collection. The instrument was validated by the researcher’s supervisor and two other experts in measurement and evaluation. The instrument was validated in terms of content validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test retest method. The index or reliability coefficient obtained was 0.78. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test all the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Independent t-test was appropriate because the mean scores of male and female prison recidivists were compared.

Results and Discussion

Research question 1: What is the influence of gender on recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State?

Table 1: Influence of Gender on Recidivism

Gender	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	(SD)
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Male	508	87.11	11.64
Female	35	12.21	2.67

Table I indicates that male prisoners obtained recidivism mean (\bar{X}) score of 87.11, while their female counterparts had mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation scores of 12.21 and 2.67 respectively. By this result, recidivism was higher among males than the females.

Research question 2: To what extent does educational qualification influence recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State?

Table 2: Influence of Educational Qualification on Recidivism

Educational qualification	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	(SD)
FSLC/SSCE	415	74.26	9.78
Others	128	33.59	4.06

Table 2 shows that prisoners with FSLC/SSCE obtained recidivism mean (\bar{X}) score of 74.26 and standard deviation (SD) score of 9.78, while those with educational qualifications higher than FSLC/SSCE had mean (\bar{X}) score of 33.59 and standard deviation score (SD) of 4.06. By this result, recidivism was higher among those with FSLC/SSCE than those (prisoners) with higher educational qualifications.

Research question 3: What is the influence of marital status on recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State?

Table 3: Influence of Marital Status on Recidivism

Marital status	Number	Mean (\bar{X})	(SD)
Married	95	28.73	3.14
Unmarried	448	76.34	9.83

Table 3 shows that prison inmates who are married obtained recidivism mean (\bar{X}) score of 28.73 and standard deviation (SD) score of 3.14, while those who are not married had mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation scores of 76.34 and 9.83 respectively. By this result, recidivism was higher among unmarried prison inmates than those who are married.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant influence of gender on recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State.

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of influence of Gender on Recidivism

Gender	N	(\bar{X})	S.D	Df	t(cal)	t(cri)	Alpha level	Remark	Decision
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Male	508	87.11	11.64	541	80.05	1.96	.05	Significant	Rejected
Female	35	32.21	2.67						

Table 4 shows that t-calculated value of 80.05, at 0.05 level of significance, and 541 degree of freedom is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. Hence, hypothesis one is rejected. [This implies that there is a significant influence of gender on recidivism among prison inmates].

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant influence on level of education on recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State.

Table 5: Independent t-test Analysis of influence of Level of Education on Recidivism

Level of education	N	(\bar{X})	S.D	Df	t(cal)	t(cri)	Alpha level	Remark	Decision
FSLC/SSCE	415	74.26	9.78	541	67.85	1.96	.05	Significant	Rejected
Others	128	33.59	4.06						

Table 5 above shows that calculated t-value of 67.85 at 0.05 levels of significance, and 541 degree of freedom is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Hence, hypothesis two is rejected. [This implies that there is a significant influence of level of education on recidivism among prison inmates]

Hypotheses 3: Marital status does not significantly influence recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State.

Table 6: Independent t-test analysis of influence of Marital Status on Recidivism

Marital status	N	(\bar{X})	S.D	Df	t(cal)	t(cri)	Alpha level	Remark	Decision
Married	95	28.73	3.14	541	84.23	1.96	.05	Significant	Rejected
Unmarried	448	76.34	9.83						

Table 6 above shows that calculated t-value of 84.23 at .05 levels of significance, and 541 degree of freedom is greater than the critical t-value (1.96). Hence, hypothesis three is rejected. [This implies that there is a significant influence of marital status on recidivism among prison inmates].

Influence of Gender on Recidivism among Prison Inmates

The result showed that gender significantly influenced recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State. [When independent t-test was applied, calculated t-value of 80.05, at 541 degree of freedom, and .05 level of significance was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 (table 6). The result further showed that the mean score of male prison inmates on recidivism is higher than that of their female counterparts]. The result that a greater number of male prison inmates were involved in recidivism is not surprising. Men generally are more

prone to crime than the females. Men tend to take more risks than the females. Such unhealthy and unnecessary risks taken by men may lead them into prison severally. The present result is in agreement with some past research findings. For example, in a study on juvenile recidivism conducted in United States of America, Mbuba (2004) found that males were more likely to be rearrested than females. Onyejiaku in Iwundu (2007) also stated that there have been marked differences between males and females in the scope and rate of delinquent behaviours. According to him, it has been estimated that boys are involved in delinquent acts five times as often as girls.

Influence of Education on Recidivism among Prison Inmates

The result showed that level of education significantly influenced recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State. [When independent t-test was applied, calculated t-value of 67.85, at 541 degree of freedom and .05 level of significance was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 (table 7). The result further showed that the mean score of prison inmates with FSLC/SSCE is higher than that of those with higher educational qualifications]. The result that a greater number of recidivists with FSLC/SSCE had significantly higher rate of recidivism could be due to limited or lack of job opportunities available to them. Education is one of the requirements for entry into employment. It therefore becomes a serious problem if one is not educated enough to prepare him for a job. This present finding lends credence to State of Florida Department of Education (2006) which found that higher levels of education correlated strongly with lower levels of crime. Research has also shown that inmates exposed to education and educational programs while incarcerated have lower recidivism rates than those with no educational exposure (Educational Testing Centre, 2006).

Influence of Marital Status on Recidivism among Prison Inmates

The result showed that marital status significantly influenced recidivism among prison inmates in Rivers State. [When independent t-test was applied, calculated t-value of 84.23, at 541 degree of freedom, and .05 level of significance was found to be greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 (table 8). The result further showed that the mean score of unmarried prison inmates on recidivism is higher than that of their married counterparts]. The result that a greater number of unmarried prison inmates were involved in recidivism is not an exaggeration. Many people who commit heinous crimes are not married, and so do not owe any responsibility to anyone. Even when they are arrested, imprisoned many times, they have nothing to lose. After all, they have no children and wife to cater for. This is the reason for the high rate of recidivism among those who are not married. The present result corroborates with State of Florida Department of Corrections (2003) and Mbuba (2004) who had earlier found that married people differ from unmarried people in terms of crime rate.

Implications for Counselling

The results of this study showed that the rate of recidivism is related to prisoners' gender, social environment, level of personal development and engagement. In the light of the above and based on the concept that the way we think about events or things affects how we

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Feel and act about them; also recognising that past events may influence present thoughts and actions, calls for counselling intervention for persons with special needs and prisoners fall into this category.

It is therefore very imperative that qualified guidance counsellors be posted to all prisons in Nigeria. It is also important that these specialized personnel be allowed to operate as full-time guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors operating in prisons should use both individual and group counselling procedures to assist prison inmates generally on how to overcome situations that may make them easy prey to crime, which in turn can bring them back to prison. Vocational counselling should also be employed by Counsellors to assist prison inmates realise where their interests lays and how best they can engage themselves in order to acquire skills that will enable them to be gainfully employed. Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) should be used by guidance counsellors to assist prison inmates. It is expected that at the end of counselling, recidivists would be more socially stable (rational, logical, useful, and productive upon release).

Recommendations

The following recommendations based on the findings were made by the researcher:

- 1) Prison authorities should take urgent steps to incorporate the different socialization processes for prison inmates into orientation programmes. For instance, the use of ex-prisoners who are useful to their various communities (upon release) as role models for serving prisoners. Having role models from one's gender or marital status can make it easier for serving prisoners to be more rational upon release from prison.
- 2) There is need for government to extend its university scholarship programme to ex-convicts (upon release). This will help expand their knowledge as well as prepare them for meaningful ventures in future.
- 3) It is recommended that government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should create more job opportunities for those who are qualified for employment. More so, government's credit facilities (loans) should be made accessible and affordable to qualified individuals who may want to be self-employed.
- 4) Another recommendation is that government and non-government organizations (NGOS) design special programmes (workshops, seminars, symposia) for married couples (parents) that will further educate them on the need for peaceful co-existence in their homes. Family peace is the beginning of peace in the nation.
- 5) Finally, guidance counsellors should be posted to all prisons in Nigeria. Guidance counsellors will assist in counselling prison inmates to be more rational and productive upon release.

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