



Perceived Injustice and Socio-Demographic Variables as Predictors of Coping Ability among Kaduna Prison Inmate

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Abstract. This research examined perceived injustice, duration in prison, gender and socioeconomic status as predictors of coping ability among Kaduna Prison inmates. Using a cross-sectional survey design, a total sample size of One hundred and sixty-five (165) Kaduna Prison inmates were selected using convenience sampling and surveyed with the questionnaire measure. They included 132 males and 33 females. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 62 years with a mean age of 41.95 (SD = 11.95). The Injustice Experience Questionnaire and Brief Cope Scale were used to collect data for the study while Hierarchical Multiple Regression was used in the analysis. The results showed that gender ($\beta = .35$, $t = 5.97$, $p < .001$), socioeconomic status ($\beta = .53$, $t = 8.83$, $p < .001$), and perceived injustice ($\beta = -.41$, $t = -7.64$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. Duration of sentence ($\beta = .00$, $t = .06$, $p > .05$) did not significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. It was recommended that Policies which encourage delay in the delivery of justice as we have today in our criminal justice system should be changed; Law enforcement agents and agencies should manage biases and investigate cases brought to them objectively to avoid incriminating and consequently convicting the wrong people.

Keywords: Perceived Injustice, Coping Ability, Kaduna Prison inmates

1. Introduction

The prison experience is unique, and is neither natural nor normal. It is considered as one of the most

degrading experiences an individual might endure (Kupers, 2008). As a result, prisoners have been found to display higher levels of psychological problems such as depression, distress (Schneider, Richters, Butler, Yap, Richards, Grant, Smith, & Donovan, 2011), post-traumatic stress disorders, apathy, paranoia, panic attacks (Morgan, 2009), sense of helplessness and personality changes (Pollock, 2006) and even suicide (Zhong, Senior, Yu, Perry, Hawton, Shaw & Fazel, 2021). In their study, Armiya'u, Obembe, Audu, and Afolaranmi (2013) raised an alarm of the prevalence of a high rate of psychiatric disorders among prison inmates in Nigeria, which they stated should be a concern to health care policy makers in the country. More recently, Orjiakor, Ugwu, Eze, Ugwu, Ibeagha, and Onu (2017) in a hermeneutic phenomenology study among prolonged Awaiting Trial Prisoners (ATPs) found that their experiences upon incarceration reflected a mixture of disbelief, denial, and negative emotions. This was followed by experiences of alienation from society and an atmosphere of uncertainty. The prison environment is plagued with factors that contribute to poor psychological health such as exposure to violence, overcrowding, solitary confinement, lack of meaningful activity, lack of privacy, poor healthcare and uncertainty about the future (Enggist, Møller, Galea, & Udesen, 2014). Also, prisoners face material deprivation in prison which ultimately creates considerable distress for the individuals and so requires them to adapt to such challenges (Irwin and Owen, 2005). Despite exposure to a stressful situation that endures over time, not all incarcerated individuals have a compromised mental well-being (Haney, 2001). The psychological and emotional survival of prisoners

depends mostly on the individual's ability to put up with the deprivations of prison, and this is determined by the individual's coping skills and the factors that affect it (Chubaty, 2001). Therefore, coping is essential for the mental wellbeing of prison inmates (Boustead and Ireland, 2005; Mefoh, Okafor, Ezeah & Odo, 2015).

Coping may be defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The significant difference in the experience of psychological distress and psychiatric morbidity among prison inmates despite being in the same environment is accounted for by the different coping strategies they employ (Chubaty, 2001). Literature has identified two major types/strategies of coping which includes active coping and avoidant coping (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen & DeLongis, 1986). An individual may use active coping where he responds to a stressful situation by defining the problem, finding solutions and weighing the costs and benefits of the solutions outlined, and taking action to deal with the stressful situation (Rocheleau, 2015). On the other hand, another individual may opt for the avoidant coping in which individuals avoid dealing with the stressor (Endler & Parker, 1994).

The transition to prison and prison life can be stressful for prisoners, therefore, coping skills are particularly important for inmates who must learn to adjust to an entirely new environment whose ideals differ from what they have known for most of their lives. The ways in which individuals choose to respond to stress have long term implications for the development of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Doron, Thomas-Ollivier, Vachon, & Fortes-Bourbousson, 2013). Problem-focused coping is generally considered as more beneficial for mental health than emotion-focused and avoidance-focused coping, even though the effectiveness of a coping style may depend on the characteristic of the stressful situation (Thoits, 1995).

How an individual copes with the stress of imprisonment and adjusts to prison life depends on a number of variables. Previous research, such as Abakwuru & Ibeh-Godfrey, 2017; Bierie, 2012 & Cesaroni & Peterson- Badali, 2010, have focused on variables such as age, gender, overcrowding, social support, and help-seeking behaviour and how they influence coping ability among prisoners. However, one aspect of prison life which potentially relates to prisoners' ability to cope and consequently prisoners'

well-being has not received much attention; that is the extent to which prisoners feel they receive a fair and just treatment.

The concept of injustice cannot be clearly understood without first explaining what justice means. Justice means that people get what they are entitled to or deserve based on who they are and what they have done (Buchanan & Mathieu, 1986; Cohen, 1986; Lerner, 1977, 1987; Mikula, 2001). The experience of unnecessary suffering as a result of another's actions and appraisals of irreparable loss are also likely to give rise to perceptions of injustice (Miller, 2001). Prior research has suggested that prisoners' perceptions of procedural justice are related to their mental health. Several studies have shown that prisoners who felt unfairly and unjustly treated in prison were more distressed, anxious, or depressed (Gover, MacKenzie, & Armstrong, 2000; Liebling & Maruna, 2005). Perception of a fair process refers to the belief that the techniques used to resolve a dispute or pass a judgment are fair and just in themselves. Direct participation in the decision making process, accuracy, bias suppression, consistency over time and across people, opportunities to appeal decisions and representativeness of values of sub groups have been found to support perception of fairness. However, all these dimensions of procedural justice judgments must not be present before an individual reaches an opinion about the fairness of the judgment (Leventhal, 1980)

Perceived injustice among prisoners can have a negative impact on their ability to cope with the strains of imprisonment and their overall mental health (Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, Eichelsheim, van der Laan, & Nieuwbeerta, 2014). According to Agnew (2001), perceived injustice can increase prisoners' risk of violence as it acts as an additional strain. This is an unsettling discovery especially as the individuals being housed in prisons are already prone to violent and aggressive behavior and also seem to lack the skills and positive stimuli such as privacy, law-abiding relationships and autonomy which are necessary to cope in a peaceful manner (Agnew, 2001).

Prisoners who were wrongly incarcerated have to deal with feelings of being unjustly treated throughout their sentence. Sarnoff (1997) described serving a prison sentence without having committed a crime as the worst form of victimization. The mental damage caused to wrongly convicted individuals is likened to that of torture survivors or war veterans (Jamieson & Grounds, 2005). The psychological effects of imprisonment for the innocent as identified disavowal, shock and betrayal; sense of cruelty and

injustice; struggle with life's meaning; a sense of abandonment by God and humanity; loss of dignity and identity; shame resulting from how they are perceived by others; surrender; PTSD and other psychiatric symptoms (Wilson, 2002). According to Westervelt and Cook (2009) the psychological consequences of perceived or actual injustice on prisoners' ranges from personality change, anxiety disorders, anger, depression, grief and suicidal ideation.

The effectiveness of coping with stress also depends on situational factors, associated with the specificity of a difficult situation, as well as on personal factors, associated with the personal resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987) such as gender, duration in prison and socio-economic status. Although an inmate's transition from the free world to imprisonment is usually characterized by increased anxiety, depression and blood pressure, with time, decrease in physiological and psychological symptoms is evident as inmates appear to successfully employ coping strategies that allows them to adjust to the prison environment (Islam-Zwart, Vik, & Rawlins, 2007). Traditionally, it was believed that long term imprisonment was detrimental to the mental health of prisoners, however, years of extensive research and empirical investigation provides a different opinion on psychological functioning across incarceration. Zamble (1992) carried out a longitudinal study across a seven-year period and found that anxiety, depression and hopelessness decreased over time, while self-esteem increased. MacKenzie and Goodstein (1985) reported similar results in a study examining the outcomes for prisoners who have been incarcerated for more than six years. Results showed that in the first three years of incarceration, inmates reported experiencing more depression, anxiety and lower self-esteem when compared to other prisoners who have served more than six years. Despite the positive progress made by prisoners over time in prison as several research results stated, there appears to be an increase in criminal thinking and development of a criminal identity for newly incarcerated inmates with no prior history of incarceration, which is likely to be a way of coping with the prison environment (Walters, 2003). Zamble and Poporino (1988) do not conform to the idea that prisoners cope better as they spend more time in the prison environment. Results of their study showed that prisoners who coped well at the beginning of their prison sentences coped well throughout their stay in prison as well (Zamble & Poporino, 1988).

Several studies have also examined the coping abilities of male prisoners (Biggam & Power, 1999;

Harreveld, et al., 2007) and female prisoners (Greer, 2002; McDonald, 2006; Fritch, 2006). Psychologist Carol Gilligan (1993) believes that women differ from men in the way that they react to a situation because of differences in development and socialization. These differences affect the ways that men and women interact with others. Women rely on relationships to define themselves and their actions, whereas men rely more heavily on themselves and react based upon how the situation will affect them personally. Research has shown that imprisoned women display higher levels of mental disorders than male prisoners (Weissman, DeLamater, & Lovejoy, 2013), with many female prisoners reporting generalized anxiety, stress, depression and sleep disorder (Boxer, Middlemass, & Delorenzo, 2009). According to Bastick and Townhead (2012) women in prison are vulnerable and they have higher rates of suicide and self-harm than men. Extant research has shown that women's vulnerability to serious health conditions can be attributed to the poor state of Nigerian prisons, since women are generally more fragile than men (Otu, Otu, & Eteng, 2013; Okwendi, Nwankwala, & Ushi, 2014). Due to the psychological and physical deprivations that characterizes the Nigerian prison, it is common to see inmates looking starved and unkempt due to the deplorable sanitary conditions of the cells which expose inmates to severe illnesses (Aduba, 2013). Apart from the health challenges that confront women in prison, women are also more vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse than men which further compound difficulties in adjusting to prison life (Durosaro, 2002). Women also face the risk of becoming pregnant as a result of the sexual assault that plagues Nigerian prisons, which often leads to psychological and emotional trauma for the prisoner coupled with the uncertainty about whether they can keep the baby. Okwendi, Nwankwala and Ushi (2014) pointed out that most Nigerian prisons lack the basic toiletries such as soap, sanitary towels and sanitary pads, which causes a decline in the hygiene of prisoners, the females especially, thereby increasing their risk of physical illnesses. The lack of basic needs in the prison environment is a big factor in the maladjustment of female prisoners as most of them are ethereal (Solanski, 2004). Women's needs actually makes their coping with the prison environment more demanding than the males (Voorhis, Wright, Salisbury & Bauma., 2010).

Socioeconomic status (SES) of prisoners has also been found to play a role in their coping ability. According to Mirowski and Ros, (2005), higher educational attainment contributes to the development of coping skills such as personal

control, problem solving ability and learned effectiveness. Education develops and at the same time improves one's ability to gather and interpret information and to solve problems on many levels, it increases one's potential to control events and outcomes in life. One encounters and solves problems that are complex through education which in turn builds problem solving skills and a sense of mastery which may mediate stress by facilitating better coping mechanisms. Higher educational attainment among prisoners is associated with higher income and greater social networks which provides for both emotional and psychological support, making adjustment to the prison environment relatively easier (Salisbury, Van Voorhis, & Spiropoulos, 2009).

While several theories have tried to establish the relationships between the variables concerned the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988). Folkman and Lazarus (1988) assert that coping is not merely a response to tension. Instead, it is influenced by an individual's cognitive appraisal of an event; and one's cognitive appraisal subsequently influences emotional arousal. They view psychological stress as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as potentially damaging to one's wellbeing. Two critical processes mediate this person-environment relationship: (a) the cognitive appraisal, which is an evaluative process that determines why and to what extent a particular transaction between a person and the environment is stressful; and (b) coping, the process through which the individual manages the demand of person-environment relationship and the ensuing emotions generated from the situation.

Essentially, appraisals mediate the relationships between antecedents and outcomes. Early in Lazarus's work, the term perception appeared in place of appraisal; however, Lazarus decided perception did not emphasize the evaluative quality of cognitive mediation properly as it was too neutral. Essentially, people are not troubled because of events they experience, but rather because of the view they take of such events. Thus, two individuals may have identical life experiences but behave in two very different ways due to the view each has taken of those events. Cognitive distortions may elicit negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, and anger (Beck & Haigh, 2014). These negative emotions may then lead an individual to take a negative view of the events that transpire. The individual must then figure out how to cope with the situation, which may be in the form of positive, conventional coping or deviant, maladaptive coping.

Prior research has suggested that prisoners' perceptions of procedural justice are related to their mental health. Several studies have shown that prisoners who felt unfairly and unjustly treated in prison were more distressed, anxious, or depressed (Gover et al., 2000; Liebling et al., 2005; Slotboom et al., 2011). Perceived injustice among prisoners can have a negative impact on their ability to cope with the strains of imprisonment and their overall mental health (Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, Eichelsheim, van der Laan, & Nieuwbeerta, 2014). This theory applies to this study because the perception of justice or injustice is different for different individuals and this difference in perception may either influence coping with the prison environment positively or negatively.

The prison's major mandate is to reform and rehabilitate, so that inmates are released back to society as better versions of themselves. However, going by the current state of Nigerian prisons and the Kaduna state prison in particular, the reverse might be the case as individuals might return as an even worse version of themselves. The physical and psychological deprivations that are evident in the prison environment are at best inhumane, and can lead to a myriad of mental illnesses for the inmates (World Health Organisation, 2014; Irwin and Owen, 2005). This situation portrays the prison as a hell hole meant only to punish instead of to correct as its name "correctional center" implies. Despite research evidence linking the prison experience to an assortment of mental illnesses, not all incarcerated inmates possess a compromised mental well-being (Haney, 2001) which can be attributed to the coping strategy they employ (Chubaty, 2001). Bieri (2012) and Cesaroni and Peterson-Badali (2010) have investigated the factors that influence the coping ability of prisoners, to be able to isolate the characteristics or factors that makes some individuals immune to the strains of the prison environment while others are not. However, one aspect of prison life which potentially relates to prisoners' ability to cope and consequently prisoners' well-being has not received much attention; that is the extent to which prisoners feel they receive a fair and just treatment. Due to the shallow nature of investigations carried out by law enforcement agencies in Nigeria (Onyeozili, 2008), the chances of individuals going through the criminal justice system to be wrongly convicted or given an unfair judgment is very high. Hence, the need to examine how perceived injustice interacts with other demographic variables to predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates as this would help policy makers design or make necessary improvements to the prison system. Aborisade and Fayemi (2016) investigated the impact of gender on

coping in prison, while Ebeh, Annorzie and Mbagwu (2019) studied jail term length, gender and age as determinants of psychological distress among prison inmates in Owerri. However, a paucity of literature exists in the study of perceived injustice as a predictor of the coping ability of Nigerian prisoners, which makes this study a great addition to literature.

2. Hypotheses

Following the review of literature, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- Perceived injustice will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.
- Duration in prison will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.
- Gender will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.
- Socioeconomic Status will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.

3. Research Methodology

Design: The Cross-sectional Survey Design was applied in this study.

Participants: Data was collected from a total of 165 adult inmates who were incarcerated within the Kaduna State Prison and volunteered to participate in the study. They comprised 132 males and 33 females. The age of the participants ranged from 22 to 62 years with a mean age of 41.95 (SD = 11.95). Majority of the participants identified as Hausa/Fulani (n = 83, 50.3%) while the rest identifies as Igbo (n = 25, 15.2%), Yoruba (n = 28, 16.97%) and others (n = 29, 17.6%). More than half of the participants reported they were single (n = 94, 56.97%) 38.8% (n = 64) were married while 4.2% (n = 7) were divorced/widowed.

Participants mean sentence length was 65.19 months (SD = 52.28, range 12 to 296). Participants had spent an average of 64 months (SD = 14.1, range 4 to 200) on their current sentences. Data obtained also showed that majority of the participants did not have a university degree (n = 59, 35.8%) while the rest had obtained a university (n = 50, 30.3%) or post graduate degree (n = 56, 33.9%).

Sample Size/Sampling Technique: The Kaduna State Federal Prison holds a total population of 2,200 inmates. The sample of this study was made up 165 prison inmates who were selected from the total population using convenience and snowball sampling technique. This sampling technique was adopted because of the strict regimented lifestyle in the prison

which did not allow for a simple random sampling technique to be used. Also not all prisoners were interested in the study, so the researcher used those who were available and willing to participate in the study. The researcher also used the help of some of the prison warders to distribute the questionnaire while making the prisoners aware that participation was voluntary.

Instrument: A questionnaire which was divided into section A – D was used. Section A investigated demographic information including participants' age, gender, ethnic identity, relationship status, level of education and duration in prison.

Section B measured perceived injustice using the Injustice Experience Questionnaire (IEQ) (Sullivan, et al., 2008). It is a 12-item scale that assesses an appraisal cognition comprising elements of the severity of loss consequent to injury (e.g., "Most people don't understand how severe my condition is"), blame (e.g., "I am suffering because of someone else's negligence"), a sense of unfairness (e.g., "It all seems so unfair"), and irreparability of loss (e.g., "My life will never be the same"). The IEQ asks respondents to indicate the frequency with which they experience different thoughts concerning the sense of unfairness in relation to their injury on a 5-point scale with the endpoints of (0) never and (4) all the time. The IEQ has been shown by Sullivan and his colleagues (Sullivan, et al., 2008; Sullivan, et al., 2009) to be internally consistent and to have good predictive validity. Sullivan, et al. (2008) reported reliability co-efficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .92 for the questionnaire. In the present study we obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .85. A total score of 30 or more on the IEQ represents a clinically relevant level of perceived injustice (Sullivan, et al., 2008).

Section C measured coping ability/strategies using the Brief Cope Scale which is an abbreviated version of the Cope Inventory (Carver, 1997). This consists of 14 major subscales which include denial, substance abuse, self-blame, emotional support, instrument support, active coping, self-distraction, venting, positive reframing, humour, planning, acceptance, religion and behavioural disengagement. Each subscale requires a response to 2 questions in the questionnaire, making a total of 28 coping behaviours, rated on a frequency of 1 (1 = I have not been doing this at all) to 4 (4 = I have been doing this a lot). These can be stratified into problem-focused and emotional-focused coping mechanisms as found in the literature (Folkman et al., 1997) in which 8 were adaptive coping (active coping, planning, use of instrumental support, use of emotional support,

positive reframing, religion, humor and acceptance) and 6 maladaptive coping strategies (venting, behavioural disengagement, substance use, denial, self-blame, self- distraction). The BRIEF COPE score was calculated by summing individual question scores. The scores ranged from 2 to 8 points for each strategy, 16 to 64 points for adaptive coping, 12 to 48 points for maladaptive coping and 28 to 112 points for Total BRIEF COPE.

A previous report to establish the reliability and validity of the scale indicated a high Cronbach’s alpha values for some domains such as Religion ($\alpha=0.82$) and Substance use ($\alpha=0.90$) (Carver, 1997). Other domains indicated acceptable values of Cronbach’s alpha. They are Active coping ($\alpha=0.68$), Planning ($\alpha=0.73$), Positive Reframing ($\alpha=0.64$), Acceptance ($\alpha=0.57$), Humor ($\alpha=0.73$), Using Emotional Support ($\alpha=0.71$), Using Instrumental Support ($\alpha=0.64$), Self-distraction ($\alpha=0.71$), Denial ($\alpha=0.54$), Venting ($\alpha=0.50$), Behavioral disengagement ($\alpha=0.65$) and Self-blame ($\alpha=0.69$) (Carver, 1997).

Procedure: A letter of identification was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Nigerian Defense Academy, requesting for permission to collect data from the prison inmates in Federal Prison, Kaduna. Approval to continue with the data collection was obtained from the warden of the facility where data was collected. Data collection periods were arranged by the warden as the prison schedule would accommodate. Potential participants were asked to gather at a data collection site at a designated time. For the data collection session, the researcher waited to provide information about the study until all inmates who indicated interest to

participate arrived at the data collection site or until it was reasonable to assume that no more inmates would be arriving for that scheduled session. Inmates arrived at various times during the designated time due to other obligations or other scheduled appointments. The researcher described the nature and purpose of the study and the procedures for completing the research materials. The potential participants were also encouraged to ask question where they are not clear. Inmates were informed that participation in the study was totally voluntary and they can walk out if they are not comfortable being a part of the study. Inmates who declined participation were allowed to leave. A total of 227 inmates arrived at the data collection site. A total of 62 inmates refused to participate in the study, and were allowed to withdraw from the study leaving 165 inmates as study participants.

Inmates who consented to participate in the study were instructed to fill out the demographic form, Brief Cope and Injustice Experience Questionnaire which had been compiled into individual research packets for each participant. Participants with literacy problems had the materials read out to them by a research assistant. The researcher collected the data packet from each individual as they finished. Inmates were thanked and dismissed from the data collection site at the end of the data collection exercise.

To ensure confidentiality, the identities of participants were not requested for and kept anonymous, rather, participants were marked using numbers. Data was entered into a personal computer by the researcher for analysis. Original data would be disposed of in a manner that will ensure confidentiality after two years of this research.

4. Results

Table 1: Showing the prediction of ‘Coping Ability’ from Control Variables, Demographic Variables and Perceived Injustice

	R	R2	R2Δ	B	Beta(β)	T
Model 1	.04	.00	.00			
Age				.031	.019	.224
Ethnicity				-.237	-.014	-.179
Marital_Stat				-.937	-.027	-.314
Model 2	.74***	.55***	.55***			
Gender				17.19***	.35***	5.97***
Duration of Sent.				-.002	-.004	-.064
SES				12.27***	.53***	8.83***
Model 3	.82***	.67***	.12***			
Perceived Injustice				-.63***	-.41***	-7.64***

- a. Dependent Variable: Coping_Ability
- b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Marital_Stat, Ethnicity, Age
- c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Marital_Stat, Ethnicity, Age, Gender, SES, Duration_of_Sentence

Regression result in table 1 above indicated that none of the control variables significantly predicted coping ability. The control variables jointly accounted for no variance in predicting the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates ($R^2\Delta = .00, p > .05$).

Hypothesis 1: Perceived injustice will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. Perceived injustice was entered in model three of the equation. Regression result showed that perceived injustice significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna state prisoners ($\beta = -.41, t = -7.64, p < .001$). Perceived injustice accounted for 12% significant variance in predicting the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates ($R^2\Delta = .12, p < .001$). This result failed to confirm the hypothesis, so, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Duration in prison will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. Regression results show that Duration of sentence ($\beta = .00, t = .06, p > .05$) did not significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. This result confirms the second hypothesis; therefore, we accept the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Gender will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. Results of regression analysis show that Gender ($\beta = .35, t = 5.97, p < .001$) significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. This result is not congruent with the prediction of the third hypothesis, so, we reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Socioeconomic Status will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.

Regression results show that socioeconomic status ($\beta = .53, t = 8.83, p < .001$), significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. The fourth hypothesis was also rejected since it was not confirmed by this result.

Duration in prison, gender and socioeconomic status entered in model 2 accounted for 55% variance in predicting the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates ($R^2\Delta = .55, p < .001$).

5. Summary of the Findings

Coping ability was significantly related to gender, socioeconomic status and perceived injustice but not significantly related to duration of sentence.

None of the control variables significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates.

Correlation results showed a strong inverse relationship between socioeconomic status and perceived injustice. This implies that prisoners from the lower class usually perceive themselves as being treated unjustly than those from the upper class.

Among the three demographic variables included in the analysis, only gender and socioeconomic status significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates.

Perceived injustice significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates. Prison inmates with higher levels of perceived injustice employed more maladaptive coping strategies.

6. Discussion on Findings

This study examined perceived injustice and demographic variables (gender, duration in prison and socioeconomic status) as predictors of coping ability among Kaduna Prison inmates.

Test of Hypothesis 1 results revealed that perceived injustice is a significant predictor of coping ability among Kaduna Prison inmates. The relationship found was a rather inverse one, which implies that an increase in perceived injustice led to a decrease in the ability of prisoners to employ adaptive coping abilities. Prisoners who felt they have been dealt with unjustly tend to employ maladaptive coping techniques such as venting, behavioural disengagement, substance use, denial, self-blame, self-distraction to get through the prison environment. This finding confirms the first hypothesis of this study which stated that perceived injustice will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates; therefore, the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This result is supported by several related studies conducted in the past. Several studies have shown that prisoners who felt unfairly and unjustly treated in prison were more distressed, anxious, or depressed (Gover, MacKenzie, & Armstrong, 2000; Liebling & Maruna, 2005). According to Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, Eichelsheim, van der Laan, and Nieuwebeerta (2014), perceived injustice among prisoners can have a negative impact on their ability to cope with the strains of imprisonment and their overall mental health. The propositions of the transactional model of coping is congruent with the findings of this study because the perception of justice or injustice is different for different individuals and this difference in perception may either influence coping with the prison environment positively or negatively. The concept of being treated justly is foreign to most prisoners in Nigeria because as Hon. Justice Peter. A. Akhiero rightly said, “the Nigeria factor is present and very potent in several of the pre-trial processes in criminal matters. When a complaint is made, the amount of seriousness to be attached to the investigation of the complaint depends on a number of factors, chief among which is the Complainant’s

ability and willingness to fund the police investigations. Where the complainant is either impecunious or unwilling to part with any reasonable sum of money, the investigation may be stalled or shoddy.” Since proper investigations are not carried out, and the majority of Nigerians can hardly afford a good defense attorney, we are likely to have many ‘innocent’ or over-punished prisoners in Nigerian prisons leading to increased perceptions of injustice in the prisons. Many prisoners in Nigerian prisons are yet to be convicted and have been awaiting trial for years due to the delay common in delivering justice in the Nigerian Criminal Justice System which also might have also affected the scores obtained for perceived injustice which in turn leads to the inability of prisoners to cope adequately because “justice delayed is justice denied.” The psychological effects of imprisonment for the innocent as identified by John Wilson include: disavowal, shock and betrayal; sense of cruelty and injustice; struggle with life’s meaning; a sense of abandonment by God and humanity; loss of dignity and identity; shame resulting from how they are perceived by others; surrender; PTSD and other psychiatric symptoms (Wilson, 2002) which occurs mostly due to the inability of prisoners to adopt adaptive coping techniques.

Hypothesis 2 test results revealed that duration in prison did not significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates. This means that how long a prisoner has stayed in prison does not improve or diminish his coping ability. Previous research results on the impact of duration in prison on coping ability have always produced conflicting results. Islam-Zwart, Vik, and Rawlins (2007) provided evidence that physiological and psychological symptoms of stress in inmates decreases over time as inmates appear to successfully employ coping strategies that allows them to adjust to the prison environment. However, the findings of the present study is in line with the findings of Zamble and Poporino (1988) which stated that prisoners who coped well at the beginning of their prison sentences coped well throughout their stay in prison as well. The second hypothesis which stated that duration in prison will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates was rejected. According to (Wilson, 2001), the mental damage caused to wrongly convicted individuals is likened to that of torture survivors or war veterans; this explains the negative relationship that was found between perceived injustice and coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates.

Hypothesis 3 test results revealed that gender significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates. From the results, it was clear that female prisoners used more adaptive coping strategies than their male counterpart even when they feel unjustly treated. The third which stated that gender will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates was accepted. The gender differences in coping ability have always had mixed results from previous studies. Psychologist Carol Gilligan (1993) believes that women differ from men in the way that they react to a situation because of differences in development and socialization. These differences affect the ways that men and women interact with others. Women rely on relationships to define themselves and their actions, whereas men rely more heavily on themselves and react based upon how the situation will affect them personally (Gilligan, 1993). This entails that the superior coping ability displayed by females may be dependent on how much support they receive from family, friends and other inmates. Generally previous studies have pointed out that men have better coping abilities than females in the prison environment. According to Bastick and Townhead (2012) women in prison are vulnerable and they have higher rates of suicide and self-harm than men.

Hypothesis 4 test results revealed that socioeconomic status significantly predicted the coping ability of Kaduna prison inmates. People from a higher socioeconomic background coped better than those from a lower socioeconomic background as revealed by the results. The fourth hypothesis which stated that socioeconomic status will significantly predict the coping ability of Kaduna Prison inmates was accepted. The predictive ability of socioeconomic status on coping ability is also consistent with past research findings. According to Mirowski and Ros, (2005), higher educational attainment contributes to the development of coping skills such as personal control, problem solving ability and learned effectiveness. Higher educational attainment among prisoners is associated with higher income and greater social networks which provides for both emotional and psychological support, making adjustment to the prison environment relatively easier (Salisbury, Van Voorhis, & Spiropoulos, 2009).

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Leventhal (1980) identified considerations that contribute to the perceived fairness of judgments

which includes accuracy, bias suppression, consistency over time and across people, opportunities to appeal decisions and representativeness of values of sub groups. These principles should be at the core of the Nigerian Justice System.

Since one of the major goals of imprisonment is rehabilitation, the prison environment should be conducive to encourage learning and unlearning of behaviours. The female prisons especially should be given extra care as they can easily contract diseases from unkempt environments. The health and safety of prisoners should not be undermined; a prison sentence should not end up being a death sentence.

The services of mental health practitioners and professionals should be heavily employed in the prisons as research has proven that the prison hold more mentally unhealthy individuals than the general population.

Law enforcement agents and agencies should manage biases and investigate cases brought to them objectively to avoid incriminating and consequently convicting the wrong people which has led to so many innocent individuals serving prison sentences.

Policies that encourage the delay in the delivering of justice as we have today in our criminal justice system should be changed. Individuals should not spend so many years awaiting trial in prison, after which they may be found to be innocent of the crime they are being tried for.

The seriousness with which investigations are carried out should not be based on the ability of the complainant to fund the investigations as this would naturally mar the objectivity of investigations. The government should provide logistic support to investigative police officers (IPO) to ease the job and to also ensure an objective investigation which would further diminish the fast rising numbers of wrongful convictions.

Training sessions should also be included in the activities of prisoners where they are trained on how to deal with difficult situations within the prison environment. A complaint commission should also be set up where prisoners can report threats or sexual harassment cases; this would make the prison environment a safer place and the mental health of prisoners would greatly improve as a consequence.

This study should be repeated in other prisons in Kaduna and across Nigeria to see if similar results

would be obtained to make for a more valid generalization.

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