

PSYCHOSOCIAL PREDICTORS OF SUICIDAL IDEATION AMONG INMATES OF TWO PRISONS IN A SOUTH-WESTERN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Few empirical studies exist on the association of resilience and gender with suicidal ideation among prison inmates in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated resilience and gender as predictors of suicidal ideation among prison inmates in a South-Western State in Nigeria. One hundred and eighty (180) inmates (103 men and 77 women) were selected from two prisons using purposive and accidental sampling techniques. Resilience was measured using Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS) and Suicidal Ideation was measured using the Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation (MSSI). Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using simple linear regressions analysis, and t-test. Resilience significantly predicted suicidal ideation ($\beta = -.43$ $p < 0.01$). Result also revealed that gender had a significant difference on suicidal ideation among inmates [$t(248) = -5.50$; $p < 0.05$]. Based on these findings, it was recommended that prison management needs to attend to the suicide ideation of inmates and possible related factors by organizing training that will foster resilience with the intention of preventing suicidal ideation among inmates bearing in mind their gender differences.

Keywords: Resilience, suicidal ideation, gender, prison inmates

INTRODUCTION

Prominent among the leading causes of death in the general population and the second or third leading cause of death among 15 to 34 years-old people is suicide (Gong, Zhang, Wang, & Liang, 2011). Similarly, among young adults and adolescence suicide is the third leading cause of death (Mojs, Warchol-Biederman, & Samborski, 2012; Singh & Joshi, 2008) and also in teenagers and young adults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). Because of this the problem of suicide among adolescence is increasing threatening.

Globally, approximately one million people commit suicide annually, 10 to 20 million attempt suicide, and 50 to 120 million are profoundly affected by the suicide or attempted suicide of a family member or associate (WHO, 2016). The World Health Organization estimates that, based on current trends,

approximately 1.53 million people will commit suicide by the year 2020 and 10 - 20 times more people will attempt suicide worldwide, representing an average of one death by suicide every 20 seconds and one attempt every 1-2 seconds (Bertolote & Fleischmann, 2002).

In the past forty-five years, deaths from suicide in both sexes and in children and adults alike have increased (Seghatoleslam, Rezaee, Sajadfar, Sadr, & Zahirod-dine, 2010). Suicidal activities refer to a range of behaviours that are similar in the deliberate intent to kill oneself. Suicidal ideation, plan and attempt constitute three important suicidal behaviors. Suicidal acts are pathologically complex and a wide range of biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual factors are involved in it (Seghatoleslam et al., 2010).

According to available research, Nigerians have identified the five leading causes of death to include sickness (26%), poverty (24%), motor accident (16%), malnutrition (7%) and natural death (6%). Poverty and malnutrition go hand in hand and so should be lumped together to make 31%. In other words, going by this poll conducted by NOIPolls Limited, poverty in all its ramifications is the leading cause of death in Nigeria. Gone were the days when malaria, HIV, stroke and heart attack were the leading causes of death in Nigeria. While attempt has been made to identify these which could be segregated to particular gender, age group or lifestyle, not much research has been done on the growing trend of suicides (The Guardian, 2018).

Besides, while effort is made by the government and institutions to help those afflicted by the aforementioned causes of death, no attempt is being made to help people in dire straits of human suffering that often spur people to take their own lives most especially in the prison.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2016) suicide ranking, with 15.1 suicides per 100,000 Population in a year, Nigeria is now the 30th most suicide-prone (out of 183 nations) in the world and the 10th in Africa. While that should worry the authorities and critical stakeholders, there are many theories as to why these Nigerians take their own lives and they are traceable mostly to the enormous emotional and financial stress as well as pervading poverty and hopeless situation. Similarly, Nigeria's Prison environment is a place characterized with hopelessness, frustration, and agony occasioned by the harsh treatment meted on the prison inmates, their separation from their love ones and restriction of their movements. Many a times, this harrowing experience has been implicated in the possible causes of suicide or self-inflicting injury.

Thus, suicidal ideation refers to the thoughts about taking one's own life with some degree of intent. Suicidal ideation with some intent does not necessarily mean that a person is an imminent risk to self, further assessment is needed. It is imperative that all suicidal ideation or thought is taken seriously and explored to determine the level of risk with the aim of reducing preventable death and harm that could result through it. Social psychologist or clinicians should assess the plan, motivation, and level of intent needed. The range of

suicidal ideation varies greatly from fleeting to detailed planning, self-harm and unsuccessful attempts, which may be deliberately constructed to fail or be discovered, or may be fully intended to succeed (Louw, Louw, & Ferns, 2007).

Suicidal activities at any extent and in any manner may have devastating effects on the mental health of the individual, family, survivor, and administrators. Just as suicide related activities did not only jeopardizes the psychological and social well-being of adolescents, but could also seriously hamper their ability to master normal developmental tasks, the same way it could seriously affect the inmates in coping with the challenges of the prison environment (Louw et al., 2007). Suicide in prison is a major public health concern most especially to the prison authority, occurring at 3-8 times the rate seen in the general population (Fazel, Grann, Kling, & Hawton, 2003). Risk factors for suicide, such as mental illness, substance use disorders and impulsivity are highly prevalent among inmates, and inmates import these risk factors into the correctional setting. The powerlessness and social exclusion experienced in prison may also contribute to suicidal behaviour (Butler, Andrews, Allnutt, Sakashita, Smith, & Basson, 2006).

Suicide is recognized as a critical problem within the prison environment, the issue of prison suicide has not received comparable attention. However, considering the nature of imprisonment in Nigeria, it has its implications on the wellbeing of an average inmate. Incarcerations either as awaiting trial or convicted inmates at any point in individual's life can be quite traumatic because consequences of imprisonment include a variety of short-term and long-term outcomes. These include the powerlessness and social exclusion experienced in prison that may contribute to suicidal intent (Butler, Andrews, Allnutt, Sakashita, Smith, & Basson, 2006). Until recently, it has been assumed that suicide is a problem for inmates as they face the initial crisis of incarceration. This assumption, however, has not been supported in the literature. The rate of suicide in prisons is far disproportionately higher than in the general population. For example, to date, little research has been done or prevention resources offered in this critical area (Omigbodun, Dogra, Esan & Adedokun, 2008). Liebling (1992) found a clear link between the pain of imprisonment and harm, both self-inflicted injury and suicide. Suicidal behaviour is a complex phenomenon, with a wide array of explanatory models and theories reflecting its multi-dimensional and multi-causal nature (Krug, Dahlberg, Meray, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). For example, sociologists, in their attempt to explain the causes of suicide, have focused on the impact of societal pressure and influences as important contributors to the suicidal behaviour of the individual (Durkheim, 1951). From a biological perspective, hereditary factors and neurophysiological changes in the brain are seen as pivotal processes that could pre-empt suicidal behaviour (Cantopher, 2003). Demographical variables and prison overcrowding has been found as predictors of psychological well-being of prison inmates in Nigeria (Awopetu, 2014). However, there is little or no scientific investigation as

to the impact of resilience and gender on suicidal ideation among prison inmates in Nigeria Prisons. Hence the reasons for this research work.

Suicidal thoughts may be present if a person is experiencing the pain of depression as the case is with the inmates in the present study (Yen, Shea, Pagno, Sanislow, & Grilo, 2003).

Identifying the personal and demographic factors that might increase or decrease the likelihood of adolescents adopting these behaviours is important for developing effective intervention programmes. There are considerable evidences in the mental health literature suggesting that certain personality trait such as resilience and emotional intelligence are associated with increased suicidal risk (Brezo, Paris, Tremblay, Vitaro, Zoccolillo, & Hebert, 2006).

Resiliency as a personality trait could be hypothesized to be particularly related to thought of harming oneself, this is because, resilience has been considered as a dispositional trait or personal quality that allows people to overcome hardships and thrive in the face of them, typically present in hardy people (Richardson, 2002). Dispositional resilience refers to an individual's belief in a personal sense of purpose, personal sense of control, and to how an individual construes changes and challenges (Bartone, Ursano, Wright, & Ingraham, 1989). This construct was initially defined as a personality characteristic that moderates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation, the ability to restore or maintain internal or external equilibrium under significant threat by means of human activities including thought and action, as well as the ability to have positive outcomes in the face of adversity (Rew, & Horner, 2003).

More, resilience has been considered as the ability to bounce back or recover from stressful circumstances in order to reach a whole adjustment to environment among university students (Smith et al., 2008). More, Rahul Kamble (2015) found a significant correlation between resilience and suicidal ideation, resilience and depression.

Some researchers argued that highly resilient individuals were generally better at maintaining their physical and psychological health and at having the ability to recover themselves more quickly from stressful events than lowly resilient ones (Ryff, & Singer, 2003). In same vein, other researchers found that undergraduate students greatly able to bounce back from adversities were more ego-resilient and optimistic individuals engaged in positive social relationships and get used to apply the coping strategies of acceptance, active coping, and positive reframing than those unable to do it (Stratta et al., 2012).

A few studies examined the association between low resilience and suicidal behavior, although findings have been rather mixed. In a 3-year longitudinal study, resilience had a protective effect for suicidal ideation among veterans even after controlling for baseline suicidal ideation (Youssef, Green, Beckham, & Elbogen 2013). Similarly, low resilience was linked to suicide attempt in substance-dependent outpatients or prisoners (Roy, Sarchiapone, &

Carli, 2007, 2011). On the contrary, Liu, Fairweather-Schmidt, Burns, Roberts, and Anstey (2014, 2016) reported no relationship between resilience and suicidal ideation when several psychological covariates were controlled. Moreover, SookBin et al. (2014) reported that suicidal ideation correlated native with resilience and self-control. Also, Jung-Ah, Chang-Uk Lee, and Jeung-Ho Chae (2014) reported that resilience potentially moderates the risk of depression and anxiety symptoms on suicidal ideation in patients with depression and/or anxiety disorders hence resilient inmates are less likely to be depressed.

Another possible factor that could predict suicidal ideation among prison inmates is their gender differences. Mihandoost (2013) systematically review the issue of suicide in Iran from 2000 to 2012. This investigation includes 21 relevant research articles. The population sample of this research included 10258 committed suicides and attempted suicides, and 71070 females and 3088 males. The result shows that odds ratio is less than one, meaning that the suicide was related to family problems, economic issues, affective involvements, and psychological disorders. Also this study indicates that the rate of suicide in females is higher than in males. The rate of female suicides in Iran is opposite to that in other parts of the world. Therefore, the main solution is to provide training to people at risk of suicide, especially the females. Suicidal ideators need to focus on problems, try to solve problems and avoid emotional behaviors.

Ibrahim, Amit, Che, Din, and Ong (2017) reported that suicidal ideation was higher among male participants compared with female participants in a cross-sectional study carried out among 232 youths aged between 15 and 25 years from selected urban areas in Malaysia. Burešová, Vrbová, and Čerňák, (2015) explored the associations between the occurrence of self-harm and adolescent personality. Out of the large sample of 1,026 respondents, 43.2% (n = 443) reported at least one experience with self-harm. The prevalence was somewhat larger in girls (n = 139, 31.4%) than boys (n = 102, 23.0%). The average age at the first experience with self-harm was 12.6 years. The results suggested intriguing gender differences in the associations between self-harm and teenagers' personalities. Girls scored significantly higher on neuroticism than boys in all self-harm frequency groups. Conversely, boys showed higher levels of psychoticism, regardless of self-harm experience.

Both neuroticism and psychoticism correlated positively with the occurrence self-harm, which means that children's personality may play an important role in transition from episodic to recurring self-harm. The interaction effects of either neuroticism or psychoticism and gender on self-harm were not significant, suggesting that the two traits are positively associated with self-harm behaviour in boys and girls more-or-less equally. Hyun Sook Park, Hyun Young, Karen, and Schepp (2005) reported that, suicidal ideation differed between male adolescents and female adolescents. However, Rahul Kamble (2015) reported that, no gender difference was found on suicidal ideation and depression among

adolescents meaning that gender may not have impact on suicidal ideation and depression as being experienced in the prison.

Hypotheses

1. Resilience will significantly predict suicidal ideation among prison inmates.
2. There will be a significant difference in suicidal ideation between male and female prison inmates.

METHOD

Design: A cross-sectional survey research method was employed in this present study with resilience and gender as independent variables, and suicidal ideation as dependent variable. The decision to use this design was because the researcher was only interested in measuring the existed relationship among the variables of interest without manipulating any.

Participants

A total of 180 inmates in Nigerian Prison Service (130 (57.2%) men, and 77 (42.8%) women participated in the research. Their age ranged from 16-20(35.6%), 21-25(44.4%), 26-30(15.6%), and above 30(4.4%).their religions were: 139 Christianity (77.2%), 41 Islam (22.8%).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Eligibility to participate in the study included all convicted prisoners incarcerated in the Nigerian Prison Service, in two western state of Nigeria during the time of this research. The respondents/inmates that were ineligible or excluded from the study comprised those classified as outliers who include inmates who are illiterate, Juvenile delinquents, and physically incapacitated, prison employees like drivers, warders etc.

Instrument

Demographic variables: This includes the followings, Age, Gender and Religion, sentence period, and educational qualification.

Resilience scale: Resilience was measured using Dispositional Resilience Scale (DRS) developed by Hystad, Eid, Johnsen, Laberg, and Bartone (2010). The 15-item scale which respondents are required to indicate agreement on a four-point scale (where 0 = not all true, and 3 = completely true). An example item is: "Most of my life gets spent doing things that are meaningful." The scale contains six items that are negatively keyed. It contains three subscales which include commitment, challenge and control subscales with 5 items each. The scale recorded Cronbach alpha of .76. The current study recorded a Cronbrach alpha of .66. Higher scores indicate more resiliency tendencies.

Suicidal Ideation scale: The Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation (MSSI; Miller, Norman, Bishop, & Dow, 1986) is a revised version of the Scale for Suicidal Ideation (SSI; Beck, Koovacs, & Weissman, 1979). The MSSI is an 18

item scale that contains 13 items from the SSI and 5 additional items. These new items are related to intensity of ideation, courage and competence to attempt, and talk and writing about death. The MSSSI was designed to be a semi-structured interview that could be administered by both professionals and paraprofessionals. The MSSSI assesses suicide symptoms over the past year. The first 4 items have been designated as screening items to identify those individuals whose suicidal ideation is severe enough to warrant the administration of the entire scale. Therefore for the purpose of this research only the 4 items will be used. Each item was rated on a 0-3 point scale and the ratings are summed to yield a total score ranging from 0 to 12. A reliability coefficient of .89 using Cronbach alpha. The current study recorded a Cronbach alpha of .76. Higher scores indicate high suicidal ideation intent.

Procedure

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire to the participants who were randomly selected through purposive sampling, the researcher seeks and obtained permission from the authority of two facilities in one of the south western states of Nigeria. The researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and they were given assurance of anonymity. Confidentiality was guaranteed as participants responses could not be traced to them. Two hundred copies of questionnaires were distributed, and one hundred and eighty were retrieved through the assistance of prison personnel. This yielded a response rate of 90%. Data collection spanned 6 weeks.

Data Analysis

In order to determine the extent and directions among the study variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted. A simple linear multiple regression analysis and t-test analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship among the Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	1				
2. Gender	-.01	1			
3. Religion	.03	.15	1		
4. Resilience	-.09	.04	-.02	1	
5. Suicidal ideation	.03	.12	.08	-.42**	1
Mean	1.89	-	-	25.68	28.68
SD	.825	-	-	4.97	5.50

Results indicated that age had no significant relationship with suicidal ideation [$r(180) = .03$; $p < 0.01$] gender had significant relationship with suicidal ideation [$r(180) = .12$; $p < 0.01$] and religion had no significant relationship with suicidal ideation [$r(180) = .08$; $p < 0.01$] had significant relationship on suicidal ideation. Resilience had significant negative relationship with suicidal ideation [$r(180) = -.42$; $p < 0.01$]. This result indicated that inmates who score high on the resilience measure reported low suicidal ideation intent and vice versa.

To test the hypothesis that resilience will significantly predict suicidal ideation among prison inmate, a simple linear multiple regression analysis was conducted. The result showed that resilience inversely predicted suicidal ideation [$\beta = -.43$, $t = 23.45$; $p < 0.01$]. This means that when resilience is high among prisoners, suicidal ideation reduces. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

The second hypothesis which stated that there will be a gender difference between male and female on suicidal ideation among inmates was tested with a t-test for independent sample. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Independent t-test showing difference between men and women on suicidal ideation

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Male	103	29.57	4.51	178	-5.54	< 0.01
Female	77	30.52	3.42			

The results showed that there was a significant difference between men and women inmates on suicidal ideation [$t(178) = -5.54$; $p < 0.01$]. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the results of correlation and regression analyses revealed that resilience and gender predicted suicidal ideation among the prison inmates. The result of the regression analysis revealed that, resilience significantly predicted suicidal ideation among prison inmate. This implies that prisoners' belief in a personal sense of purpose, personal sense of control, and to how a prisoner construes changes and challenges influences their level of suicidal ideation. Hence a resilient prison inmate tends to have little or no thought of suicide and where he or she does, the ability to cope and prevent the act from been committed is very high because such prison inmate is psychologically protected or immuned from committing suicide. The result is consistent with the findings of Marnin and Gordon (2008); Roy et al. (2011); Sungeun and Moran (2017). Marnin and Gordon (2008) found that the resiliency factors in general, and perceived meaning in life in particular, explained significant added variance in suicide ideation over and above measures of mental and physical health

problems. Roy et al. (2011) revealed that resilience significantly influence inmates' personality. Sungeun and Moran (2017) found that resilience was inversely associated with suicidal behavior, but this protective role of resilience was applicable to men only. Moreover, the result is in consonance with the work of Ryff and Singer, 2003 who argued that highly resilient individuals were generally better at maintaining their physical and psychological health and at having the ability to recover themselves more quickly from stressful events than lowly resilient ones (Ryff & Singer, 2003).

Moreover, the result of this study also showed significant gender difference between male and female on suicidal ideation. The implication of this is that, suicidal ideations of an individual can be influenced by one's gender. In other words, an individual sense of suicidal thoughts can be influenced by one being either male or female. The findings of this study corresponds the works of Mihandoost (2013); Burešová, Vrbová, and Čerňák (2015); in which their findings indicated that the rate of suicide in females is higher than in males. In the same vein, this finding corroborate the findings of Mohamed, Abdel Fattah, and Masry (2014) which confirmed Female patients who were divorced, widowed, or married, and those with more than 6 years of education to have high rates of suicidal ideation. In their work, they assessed some demographic profile and personality traits in relation to suicidal ideation in depressive disorders. A cross-sectional study was conducted in the Inpatient Ward and the Outpatient Clinic of the Psychiatry Department, Zagazig University Hospitals, Sharkia, Egypt, during the period from January 2013 to June 2014. Seventy patients (46 female and 24 male), age from 18 to 60 years, with depressive disorders diagnosed according to the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 4th ed. (DSM-IV) were subjected to a screening using the Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation and the Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire (Arabic version). 65.7% of the patients included in the study had suicidal ideation during the course of their illness.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the study shows a numbers of finding which can be verified in other similar studies. It can be concluded that gender and resilience significantly and independently had predictive influence on suicidal ideation among prison inmates. The result also revealed that suicidal ideations can be significantly influenced by one's gender. This indicated that prison inmate's belief, perceived sense of control, and how to solve challenges influences students level of suicidal ideation. However, the high prevalence of suicide risk factors among prisoner populations complicates the task of identifying which prisoners are most at risk of attempting suicide. Further work is required to determine particular patterns of risk factors that heighten the likelihood of a suicide attempt. Prospective studies encompassing entire prisoner populations

would assist in more clearly defined associations between risk factors for suicide, and suicide attempt, among prisoners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the researcher recommends the following;

Prison personnel should organize programme that will enhance resilience among the inmates to reduce been prone to suicide ideation. Gender of inmates must also be considered why initiating or implementing any policy in the prison facility in order to cater for different categories of the inmates.

Limitations and suggestions for future studies

This study has certain limitations which should be taken into account for future studies on suicidal ideation among prison inmates. The sample size was limited to a state in Nigeria which cannot be easily generalized to the general population of prison inmates in Nigeria. Therefore, further studies should use more population sample in studying suicidal ideation among prison inmates. Also, further studies are needed to provide a better understanding of suicidal ideation among prison inmates by considering variables such as prison environment, personality characteristics of the prison inmates.

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