

CORRELATES OF DEPRESSION AMONG PRISON INMATES IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

***Anthony G. Balogun**

&

Philomena A. Olawoye

Adekunle Ajasin University

***Correspondence:** Anthony G. Balogun, Department of Pure & Applied Psychology, Adekunle Ajasin University, P. M. B. 001 Akungba-Akoko, 34-234 Ondo State, Nigeria. E-mail: tony_b28@yahoo.com
Phone: +2348032960406.

ABSTRACT

Despite the prevalence of depression among prison inmates in Nigeria, there are limited studies on the correlates of depression among prison inmates in Nigeria. In view of this gap in knowledge, this study examined the influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on depression among prison inmates in two South-western states in Nigeria. A total of 233 (201 males; 32 females) participants were selected for the study. Their ages ranged between 21 to 69 years ($M = 31.3$; $SD = 3.23$). Results revealed that inmates who were high in emotional intelligence were significantly less depressed compared with those with low level of emotional intelligence. Similarly, inmates with high self-esteem were significantly less depressed compared with those who reported low self-esteem. Lastly, inmates with high emotional intelligence and self-esteem reported the lowest level of depression compared with other categories of inmates. The findings of this study implicated the need to include emotional intelligence training in Nigeria prison reformation and rehabilitation programmes. In addition to that, rehabilitation programmes should be designed to enhance the self-esteem of prison inmates.

Keywords: Depression, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, prison inmates

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, studies (e.g. Akiskal, 2005; Goldberg & Huxley, 1999; Ciarrochi, Deane, & Anderson, 2000; Golden, Convroy, & Dwyer, 2007; Yusuf & Adeoye, 2011) have examined the incidence and prevalence of depression and there seems to be a

consensus that the phenomenon is a global problem. Moreover, the statistics on the prevalence of depression released by World Health Organization (WHO) attested that depression is the fourth urgent health problems in the world (Akiskal, 2005). WHO estimated that by the year 2020, depression would be the second high disease

burden of non-infectious diseases (Murray & Leez, 1996). Although everyone in the world suffers from one form of depression or the other (Yusuf & Adeoye, 2011), it may be more pronounced among prison inmates, especially in Nigeria. This is not surprising because earlier studies on prison inmates (e.g. Idemudia, 1997) have identified depression as one of the major problem facing most prison inmates in Nigeria.

Available information from prison officials suggest that government, churches and a few Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) only provide toiletries and other social supports for inmates (Dimkpa, 2011). Unfortunately, little or nothing has been done on the mental health of Nigerian prison inmates. If inmates in Nigerian prison continue to experience high level of depression and nothing is done to address this problem it might make them feel sick (physical illness), hopeless, worthless, and even make them attempt suicide. These may consequently affect their psychological functioning such as their interpersonal relationship and level of adjustment.

Review of extant studies (e.g. Dimkpa, 2011; Durosaro, 2002) on prison inmates in Nigeria revealed that much research attention has been focused on the plights of prison inmates, prisoners' adjustment, and counselling needs of female prisoners, whereas less attention has been paid to prison inmates' level of depression. Moreover, available studies on depression among other samples outside Nigeria focused more on social support, stress, self-esteem, optimism, and pessimism (Abela & Skitch, 2007;

Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2006; Orth, Robins & Meier, 2009; Schutte, Malouff, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998; Talaei & Feyyazi, 2009). Others examined the associations among emotional intelligence, culture, perfectionism, unconditional self-acceptance, and depression (Fernandez-Berrocal, Salovey, Vera, Extremera & Ramos, 2005; Flett, Besser, Davis & Hewitt, 2003).

Generally, review of literature on depression reveals few or no empirical data regarding depression and its psychological antecedents (e.g. emotional intelligence and self-esteem) among prison inmates. Thus, gaps exist in the literature in this area. This study was conducted to fill the gap. Therefore, this present study examined the influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on depression among prison inmates in Nigeria.

It is a normal experience for people to feel sad or blue from time to time (Yusuf & Adeoye, 2011). But when the intensity of the sadness increases and persists to the extent that it begins to interfere with the individual's overall life, it has therefore become depression and requires psychological intervention (Yusuf & Adeoye, 2011).

Depression is characterized by a mood or affective disorder and sadness, dyphoria, and hopelessness. It is a complex disorder that can occur as a result of a multitude of different factors, including biological, emotional, and environmental influences. Symptoms of depression ranged from physical, cognitive, to behavioural symptoms (e.g. constipation, aches, pains, undue pessimism about the

future, slowed movements) (Furegato, Santos & Silva, 2008). The diagnosis of depression does not require an individual to display all of the above symptoms, rather the presence of some symptoms are sufficient. The DSM-IV requires five or more specified symptoms during the same two-week period for a diagnosis of major depressive disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

As a mood disorder, the study of depression and how it can be reduced has attracted the interest of many researchers' specifically because of the deleterious effects it may have on people's life. Indeed, the health and psychological impacts of depression on victims of depression cannot be over emphasized. People with depression often feel hopelessness, face a lot of physical illness (such as constipation, aches, pains and fatigue) and are often preoccupied with the thoughts of committing suicide (Terris, Bok & Calje, 1998). Studies have shown that depressed people also experience severe changes in mood, emotion, behaviour, and thoughts and often make many physical complaints (Franck & Raedt, 2007; Furegato, Santos & Silva, 2008). Depression can interfere with patient's interpersonal relationship and can affect everyday activities of the sufferers (Blazer et al., 1980).

That depression is more pronounced among prison inmates in Nigeria is not surprising. This may be because when people are imprisoned, their freedom is curtailed. This lack of liberty can lead to different types of reactions such as frustration, anger, anxiety and depression. Corroborating

this view, Haney (2003) submitted that during incarceration, prisoners often develop a wide range of psychological disorders (e.g. depression and anxiety). Unlike people who are not imprisoned, the option of dealing with depression is limited among prisoners (Osinowo, 1999). It can take the form of isolation, being uncommunicative or hostile and refusing to eat and work.

Prison inmate who is emotionally intelligent may enjoy life better, and be less depressed than those with low level of emotional intelligence. This is because they possess the ability to understand, repair, control, and manage their emotion and the emotion of others and cope or adapt well to stressful environment without falling apart but by actively coping with stress (Carmeli, 2003; Krumer, 2005).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional growth (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). People with high emotional intelligence often see the positive and brighter side of life than those with low emotional intelligent. During difficulties, emotionally intelligent individual tend to focus on resolution than ascribing blame or fault to others or oneself. Thus, such individuals may be less depressed than their counterparts.

Studies have shown that individual with high level of EI reported low level of depression because of their ability to be able to cope/adapt, tolerate, and control stressful life

events (Fernandez-Berrocal, Salovey, Vera, Extremera & Ramos, 2005).

By implication, an emotionally intelligent prisoner may also have the ability to avoid dysfunctional emotions and use this in adaptive ways to alleviate feelings of frustration, anger, depression, anxiety and sadness. Other studies (e.g. Downey et al., 2008; Saklofske, Austin & Minski, 2003) have also shown that high emotional intelligence decreases the level of proneness to depression (i.e., tendency to develop depressive feelings). Regrettably, no substantial empirical study has attested to this fact among Nigerian sample.

Another pivotal variable implicated in depression is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes or likes himself or herself (Baumeister, 1993). It is how you judge and value yourself, own talents, experiences, skills and attributes (Tamra & Nicola, 2006). High self-esteem indicates that an individual has self-respect, a sense of self-worth, value, and a feeling that you appreciate who you are (Ciarrochi, Deane & Anderson, 2002; Talaei, Fayyazi, & Ardani, 2009; Tamra & Nicola, 2006). Low self-esteem, on the other hand, implies low sense of self-worth, self-respect, and low perceptions on one's value, talent and skills.

It is generally believed that there are many benefits of having a positive view of one self. Those who have high self-esteem are presumed to be psychologically happy and healthy (Branden, 1994; Chamorro-Premuzic, Bennett, & Furnham, 2007) whereas

those with low self-esteem are believed to be psychologically distressed and perhaps even depressed (Tennen & Affleck, 1993).

Having high self-esteem apparently provides benefits to those who possess it: they feel good about themselves; they cope effectively with challenges are immune and less vulnerable to stress and negative feedback, and live in a social world in which they believe that people value and respect them. High self-esteem individuals are more likely to have higher self-efficacy than their low self-esteem counterparts (Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Locke, McClear, & Knight, 1996), which contributes to their ability to take up challenges and cope with stress under any environment.

Thus, inmates who possesses self-efficacy are assertive and belief that their efforts would produce success. It is therefore not out of place to say that a prison inmate who has high self-esteem may run pass depression because he/she value, appreciate, and feels good about his/her self. He may be optimistic and believes he can cope effectively with any challenges arising from the prison environment. But, people with low self-esteem are often vulnerable and susceptible to depression (Yousafzai & Siddoqi, 2009). For example, Abela and Skitch (2007) found that children possessing high levels of dysfunctional attitudes and low levels of self-esteem reported greater elevations in depressive symptoms following elevations in hassles than other children. Against this background, we tested the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses

1. Prison inmates with high emotional intelligence will report a significantly lower level of depression compared with those who have low emotional intelligence.
2. Prison inmates with high self-esteem will report a significantly lower level of depression compared with those who have low self-esteem.
3. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem will have a significant interaction influence on depression such that inmates with high emotional intelligence and high self-esteem will report the lowest level of depression compared with other categories of inmates.

METHODS

Design and Participants

Based on the fact that this study has two factors, each with two levels, a 2 x 2 factorial design was adopted. The independent variables were emotional intelligence (high and low) and self-esteem (high and low). The dependent variable is depression. A total of 233 prison inmates were sampled from prisons in two large cities in South-western Nigeria. The two states were selected due to their population-induced problems such as overcrowding and the cosmopolitan nature of the place (Ogunbamila, 2011). Thus, crimes may be more rampant in these States than other South-western States in Nigeria. The participants comprised 201 males (86.27%) and 32 females

(13.73%). Their ages ranged between 21 to 60 years with a mean of 31.3 and standard deviation of 3.23. Also 111 (47.64%) were Christians, 86 (36.91%) were Muslims, and 36 (15.45%) were traditionalist.

Measures

Emotional intelligence: This was measured using a 30-item self-report Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS) developed by Salovey, Mayer, Goleman, Turvey and Palfai (1995). TMMS measured the core areas of emotional intelligence: emotional attention (13 items), emotional clarity (11 items), and mood repair (6 items). Examples of items are: "Feelings give direction to life" (emotional attention), "I am usually very clear about my feelings" (emotional clarity), and "When I become upset I remind myself of all the pleasures in life" (mood repair). The scale is predicated on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Salovey, et al. (1995) obtained .78, .85, and .78 Cronbach's alpha coefficients for emotional attention, emotional clarity, and mood repair subscales, respectively. Balogun (2012) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .83 among bank employees in Nigeria. Also, using Local Government workers, Ogunbamila (2011) obtained .76 Cronbach's alphas for the overall scale. In this present study, a Cronbach's alpha of .71 was obtained for the overall scale. The composite score is used in this study. Scores above the mean implies high emotional intelligence while score below the mean indicate low emotional intelligence.

Self-esteem: Was measured using the 10-item self-esteem scale developed by Rosenberg (1965). The scale was designed to measure global feelings of self-acceptance and self-worth. It was rated on a 4-point scale (Strongly agree = 1; Strongly disagree = 4). Sample item include: "I certainly feel useless at times. Rosenberg (1965) reported a test-retest reliability of .85 and an internal consistency reliability of .88. A Cronbach's alpha of .75 was obtained for the scale in this study. Score above or equal to the mean implies high self-esteem while score below the mean indicate low level of self-esteem.

Depression: This was measured using a 20-item Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS) developed by Zung (1965). It was designed to assess the cognitive, affective, psychomotor, somatic and social/ interpersonal dimensions of depression. The scale was scored on a 4-point scale (1 = Some or a little of the time; 4 = Most or all of the time). Sample item include: "I feel down-hearted, blue and sad". Zung (1965) obtained a concurrent validity coefficient of .79 between SDS and Hamilton Rating Scale (HRS) by Hamilton (1960); and .70 between SDS and the depression subscale of MMPI. A three-day test-retest reliability coefficient of .93 was obtained by Obiora (1995) among Nigerian sample. Score above the mean implies that the individual was highly depressed while score below the mean suggest that the individual had low level of depression.

Procedure

These researchers obtained permission from management of the two prisons that participated in the study. This gave the researcher access to the prison yard. The purpose of the study was then explained to the participants as they were also given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of their identities and responses. Participants also had the right to discontinue with the research whenever they felt so. Two hundred (250) questionnaires were administered to the participants by the researchers with the help of the prison officials. Out of the 250 questionnaires administered, 233 were duly completed and found usable for analysis. This yielded a response rate of 93.2%.

Data Analysis

In order to determine the extent and direction of associations among the study variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. Hypotheses 1 to 3 were tested using a 2 x 2 ANOVA.

RESULTS

The results in Table 1 established that emotional intelligence had a significant negative relationship with depression [$r(231) = -0.21; p < 0.01$]. Similarly, there was a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and depression [$r(231) = -0.24; p < 0.05$], meaning that the higher the self-esteem of prison inmates, the lower their level of depression.

Table 1: Mean, and SD, and Correlations among the Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.Age	1						12.34	6.28
2.Gender	.05	1					-	-
3.Religious affiliation	.34**	.01	1				-	-
4.Emotional intelligence	.21*	-.61*	.42*	1			81.34	14.34
5.Self-esteem	.43**	.23*	.09	.18*	1		20.13	4.78
6. Depression	.51*	.04	.31**	-.21**	-.24*	1	41.67	10.83

Note: ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$. $N = 233$.

In order to evaluate hypotheses 1 to 3, the SPSS Data Categorization Wizard was used to divide the participants into four groups (high and low emotional intelligence and high and low self-esteem) based on their scores

on the measures of emotional intelligence and self-esteem. A 2 x 2 ANOVA was conducted to test the three hypotheses. The results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: A Summary of 2 x 2 ANOVA Showing the Influence of Emotional Intelligence and Self-esteem on Depression

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Emotional intelligence	341.71	1	757.74	13.45	< .05
Self-esteem	377.45	1	567.55	11.34	< .05
Emotional intelligence x Self-esteem	486.91	2	386.61	15.23	< .05
Error	6115.12	229	4101.12		
Total	217065.43	233			

Results in Table 2 revealed that emotional intelligence had a significant influence on depression [$F(1, 229) = 13.45; p < .05$]. Also, as indicated in the result, self-esteem had a significant influence on depression [$F(1, 211) = 11.34, p < .05$]. Lastly, the results in Table 2 revealed a significant interaction influence of emotional intelligence

and self-esteem on depression [$F(2, 211) = 15.23, p < .05$]. The results in Table 2 did not indicate the direction of the F , therefore, the hypotheses could not adequately evaluated. Hence, the mean scores of the groups were compared. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and SD Scores of the Groups in Depression

Groups		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
High emotional intelligence	High self-esteem	7.35	5.73	33
	Low self-esteem	11.00	4.37	41
	Total	9.23	2.22	104
Low emotional intelligence	High self-esteem	11.12	2.10	96
	Low self-esteem	14.65	2.22	63
	Total	12.85	7.45	129
Total	High self-esteem	10.23	5.41	92
	Low self-esteem	13.58	6.26	141
	Total	12.57	6.28	233

The results in table 3 indicates that prison inmates who possessed high emotional intelligence reported low level of depression ($M = 9.23$; $SD = 2.22$) than prison inmates with low level of emotional intelligence ($M = 12.85$; $SD = 7.45$). Hypothesis 1 was therefore confirmed. Also, prison inmates with high level of self-esteem experience lower depression ($M = 10.23$; $SD = 5.41$) compare to their counterparts with low self-esteem ($M = 13.58$; $SD = 6.26$). Hence, hypothesis 2 was confirmed. Compared with other categories of inmates, individuals who had high level of emotional intelligence and were also high on the measure of self-esteem reported the lowest level of depression ($M = 7.35$; $SD = 5.73$). This confirmed hypothesis 3.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the role played by emotional intelligence and self-esteem on depression among prison inmates in two prisons in two south-western states in Nigeria. Results supported the propositions of the three hypotheses. That emotional intelligence significantly influenced depres-

sion among prison inmates concurred with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Ciarrochi et al., 2002; Palmer et al., 2002; Saklofske et al., 2003) that individuals who can manage their emotion and others emotions responded less intensively to stressful situations and exhibit less suicidal ideation, less depression, and less hopelessness.

The result of this study also supported Fernandez-Berrocal et al.'s (2005) findings that individual who can regulate their emotion reported less depression. Furthermore, this result is line with the findings of Downey et al. (2008). The authors found that the dimensions of emotional intelligence significantly predicted depression among major depressive patients.

The reason could be that those prison inmates' in Nigeria who have high level of emotional intelligence possess the ability to understand, clarify, repair, adjust their emotion and the emotion of others, and use this in an adaptive ways to solve emotional problems like depression than prison inmate with low emotional intelligence. They might always see the positive side of life and have a strong belief that they could adapt to any

stressful situation by not becoming despondent.

Apart from these, being emotionally intelligent might give inmates the ability to avoid dysfunctional emotions and use this in adaptive ways to alleviate feelings of frustration, anger, depression, anxiety and sadness. This finding corroborated the findings of Saklofske et al. (2003) who reported a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and depression-proneness (i.e. tendency to develop depressive feelings).

The findings of the present study on the connection between self-esteem and depression corroborated the results of Flett et al. (2003). They reported negative association between high unconditional self-acceptance and low depression. An important explanation might be that those prison inmates in Nigeria with high self-esteem tended to value, respect, like, and believe in themselves. This might make them report low depression than their counterparts. They might also be less depressed because they often feel good about themselves and were able to cope effectively with challenges and negative feedback.

Finding of this study is also in line with the findings of Crawford (2005) who reported that self-esteem and depression were inversely related in both employed and unemployed partners individually and collectively. Without doubt, the findings of this present study is in consonance with Abela and Skitch (2007) that children possessing high levels of dysfunctional attitudes and low levels of self-esteem reported greater elevations in depres-

sive symptoms following elevations in hassles than other children.

Lastly, finding of this study showed a significant joint influence of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on depression among prison inmates in Nigeria. That emotional intelligence and self-esteem had a significant joint influence on depression is not surprising because self-management of emotions and the confidence individuals have in their ability to execute certain courses of action could have enabled the prison inmates to be aware of their emotions, coped with strong feelings, adapt to challenges or stressors and not be overwhelmed or paralyzed by the depression invoking situations in the prison.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, depression is a major problem among prison inmates in Nigeria (Idemudia, 1997; Osinowo, 1999). Although, studies on depression abound, however, none have simultaneously examined the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) and self-esteem on depression among prison inmates in Nigeria, indicating a vacuum in literature. The present attempted to fill the gap by investigating the effects of EI and self-esteem on depression using some prison inmates in south-western Nigeria as samples.

In support of the study hypotheses, the findings of this present study showed that emotionally intelligent prison inmates were less depressed than those with level of emotional intelligence. More so, the finding showed that inmates with high self-

esteem reported low level of depression than their counterparts.

This finding has practical implications for reviewing and updating Nigeria prison reforms and, specifically in relations to rehabilitation of prison inmates. The fact that training on emotional intelligence has not been included in the rehabilitation and reformatory programme in Nigerian prisons might account for the major reason why some prisoners develop high level of depression. Training prison inmates on emotional intelligence would go a long way to help them to adapt/cope to/with challenges or stressors and understand, manage, control, and repair their emotion and emotion of others. Consequently, this may reduce inmates' chance of being depressed during and after their sentence period. Based on the finding of this present study, it was suggested that Nigeria Prison (NP) management should include training on emotional intelligence in their reformatory and rehabilitation programme.

As demonstrated in this study, depression can be reduced among Nigerian inmates by enhancing their self-esteem. Therefore, Government, prison officials and NGOs should focus on and design programmes that can help enhance the self-esteem of prison inmates in Nigeria rather than paying attention to only the provision of toiletries and other social facilities for inmates (Dimkpa, 2011).

In addition, this study has implicated the need for Government to engage the services of psychologists (e.g. counselling or clinical psychologists). Depression is a psychological disorder and thus requires the service

of an expert with grounded knowledge in the principles, theories, and methods of psychology. Indeed, clinical and counselling psychologists can help in enhancing the self-esteem of prisoners (especially those with low self-esteem) and counsel them on how they can cope or deal with challenges and help them solve adjustment problems while clinical psychologists on the hand can apply psychotherapy to solve mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Despite the contribution of this study to knowledge, the results of the present study should be generalized with caution. This is because samples were taken from just two prisons in Nigeria. Apart from that, this study considered the influence of two personality variables (emotional intelligence and self-esteem). Future studies should however, explore the joint influence of personality factors (e.g. emotional intelligence and self-esteem) and situational factors (e.g. social support) on depression. Finally, this study did not indicate whether the independent variables actually cause the depression, therefore subsequent studies may carry out an experimental research to confirm the cause-effect of emotional intelligence and self-esteem on depression.

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