



Religiosity as a Predictor of Prisoners' Adjustment: The Mediatory Role of Resilience among Inmates in South-West Nigeria

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Article History

Received: 15 July 2022

Revised: 9 September 2022

Accepted: 13 September 2022

Published: 16 September 2022

How to Cite

Agesin, B. E. and Adebayo, S. O. (2022). Religiosity as a Predictor of Prisoners' Adjustment: The Mediatory Role of Resilience among Inmates in South-West Nigeria. *Sumerianz Journal of Social Science*, 5(3): 52-58.

Abstract

The study of prison behaviour, particularly adjustment after incarceration has evolved with the cause of time and has ultimately become a veritable source for understanding how prisoners employ personal adjustment characteristics in their respective socio-cultural, and demographic variables. These behaviours define the social position of inmates and provide a better understanding of the behavioural process that reduces the overall economic cost of adjusting problems within prison communities. The problem of adjustment is under-reported in commonplace within the Nigerian Correctional Service. The study determined the role of religiosity as a predictor of adjustment among inmates in southwest Nigeria: The mediatory role of resilience. Using a correlational survey design and systematic sampling technique, **four hundred and seventy-eight convicts** responded to the religiosity scale, resilience Scale, and Prison Adjustment Scale. Analysis of the data with Linear and multiple regression and Sobel statistics. Findings revealed that religiosity significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment [$\beta.14, t 2.85', < .01$], and Resilience significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment $\beta.18, t 2.25', p < .05$. Furthermore, the strength with which resilience mediated the existing relationship between prison adjustment and religiosity was significant. Thus, ($Z = 2.60, p. 01$). It was recommended that prison management must include faith-based programs since it's implicated as an important enhancer of adjustment among inmates as evidenced in this study. The program is essential in promoting or enhancing psychologically well-adjusted prison inmates.

Keywords: Religiosity; Prison adjustment; Resilience; Inmates.

1. Introduction

There has been growing concern about how inmates adjust to prison life. The patterns of adjustment to incarceration can have significant implications (Humber *et al.*, 2013). The extent to which adaptations are predisposed by the correctional facility's environment itself or determined by the prisoners' characteristics has been of great concern (Africa Centre for the Prevention of Crime, 2010). The discomforts of confinement affect prisoners in diverse ways (Jeff *et al.*, 2010). Jimoh (2007), asserts that inmates are opened to a new culture of deprivation, solitude and alienation plays a significant role in prisoners' adjustment pattern. The total impact of solitude, and being taken far away from loved ones often lead to depression among imprisoned individuals (Ashkar and Kenny, 2008). These and many more circumstances pervading the prison environment may lead to a myriad of behavioural concerns in the lives of these individuals and those of significant others within this category of people (Humber *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, it becomes important that understanding behavioural mechanisms that underlie prisoner adjustment in prison populations calls for research attention.

Adjustment generally refers to the utilization of skills and experiences that facilitate personal integration into the society to which one belongs (Weiten *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, an adjustment could also mean the processes through

which individuals manage or cope with the stress of everyday life (Weiten *et al.*, 2011). Bakare (1990), defines an adjustment as behaviours that help a person to be well adjusted and comfortable in his particular environment; hence, such behaviour as nervousness, depression or withdrawal from society is a question of adjustment. Moreover, adjustment refers to the means through which a person meets his environment, or is seen as the way a person feels and behaves under new life situations and experiences (Jeff *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, prisoners' adjustment could be referred to as the situation through which inmates cope with the life demands of incarceration situations. The extent to which an inmate's adjustment to imprisonment is influenced by religiosity and the prisoner's 'pre-prison characteristics' (imported) has long been of considerable debate. It is important to see prisoners' adjustment as a strong survival achievement towards adjusting to the prison environment. The individual experience of incarceration is intentionally unknown to society (Haney, 2001). Interestingly, one of the possible predictors of Prisoner adjustment is religiosity.

2. Prisoner's Religiosity

Perceived prisoners' religiosity is the discernment that a higher supernatural or ecclesiastical force determines the outcomes of an individual's life. Perceived religiosity extends to all forms of belief, dogma or ritualistic practice or belief systems (Pargament, 2004). It's expected that prisoners' religious participation can enhance adjustment among prison inmates. This is because previous studies have shown that a minimal likelihood of criminal activity and drug use; increased interpersonal congeniality or "niceness;" improved personal well-being, both psychological and physical; comfort for persons facing crises such as divorce and unemployment; participation in the political process; and increased volunteerism, are all associated with religion and religious participation (Kelly *et al.*, 2005).

It has well been reported historically that religion can be the springboard for the acceptance of one's fate in the face of challenges of life (Plante *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, studies have proved that religiosity helps in the prevention of depression may be because religious activities are the meeting point of organic-cultural flows that strengthened joy and challenge suffering by drawing on human and super-human forces to make decisions and set boundaries that are used in evaluating one's belief (Pargament, 2004). The people with stronger religious faith have shown higher levels of life satisfaction, more personal happiness and fewer negative psychological consequences of traumatic life events (Schumaker *et al.*, 2013). Religiosity is positively related to several measures of psychological well-being. Thus, there is a strong belief that religion impacted many people's lives but the evidence has not been conclusive (Schumaker *et al.*, 2013).

Religiosity has also been shown, for instance, to ameliorate the repercussions of childhood poverty on self-esteem (Henderson, 2016). It was also a cross-cultural universality of the idea that religion bolsters one's self-esteem (Sedikides and Gebauer, 2021). Moreover, religiosity has been shown, for instance, to ameliorate the repercussions of childhood poverty on self-esteem (Henderson, 2016).

The usefulness of religion in negotiating universal daily stressors, coupled with the inherent stress of being a prisoner in Nigeria, is one explanation posed for the value that many individuals attached to religion. However, there is inadequate literature that treated the influence of religiosity on the prisoners' adjustment, the reason for this present study.

3. Resilience

Another variable of interest in this study that may predict prisoners' adjustment is how resilient the prisoners are. Resilience is one of the psychological resources that could help prisoners cope with the challenges in the prison environment. Despite the plethora of works on resilience, there is little agreement on a single definition of resilience among scholars. Resilience could be described as a reference framework to describe the positive aspects and mechanisms in an individual, group, material, or system that when facing a challenging and debilitating situation affecting their integrity and stability, enables them to come out stronger (Vaquero *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, resilience is best defined as the ability of a body to take full control of disturbances and still perform satisfactorily. Armstrong *et al.* (2011) and as the capacity to change to maintain the same identity (Arslan, 2016). Resilience is when "Some individuals can come back despite having experienced serious disturbances or challenges – their outcome being better and stronger than other individuals who suffered the same experiences" (Rutter, 2013).

Relatively, a few researchers have shown that resilience has been found to play a major role in decreasing depressive symptoms (Southwick and Charney, 2012) and trauma symptoms (Olatunji *et al.*, 2014). Resilience could be found in people who develop psychological and behavioural capacities that enable them to remain calm during crises and to move on from the incident without long-term negative consequences (Olatunji *et al.*, 2014). Resilience has been significantly linked to health promotion and well-being, especially when faced with adversity (Ong *et al.*, 2006). However, not every person who experiences traumatic events in childhood will grow to be troubled in adolescence. People who show stable and healthy functioning levels can cope positively with resilient individuals (Olatunji *et al.*, 2014). Scientific research has suggested links between resilience and depressive symptoms, these studies vary in their evidence of such a relationship. For instance, Sart *et al.* (2016) stressed that although scientific literature is scant, experiences of self-harm tendency are common, and reactions vary due to a lot of factors that determine the individual reaction to the trauma, especially in prison populations, and one of such factors is resiliency, the capacity to adapt in adverse circumstances.

Juan *et al.* (2020), found out that, resilience and self-esteem acted as mediators between life events and coping styles. Resilience can directly mediate life events and coping styles.

Moreover, religiosity has been shown, for instance, to ameliorate the repercussions of childhood poverty on self-esteem (Henderson, 2016).

Resilience is commonly explained and studied in the context of a two-dimensional construct concerning the exposure to challenges and the positive adjustment outcomes of that stressors (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). These two judgments, one is about a positive adaptation which is considered behavioural or social competence or success at meeting any particular task at a specific life stage, and the other is about the significance of risk associated with negative life conditions that are related to adjustment difficulties. Therefore, the present study is addressing this lacuna by examining Prisoners' religiosity as a predictor of prisoners' adjustment among prisoners in South-West Nigeria: The mediatory role of resilience.

4. Statement of Hypotheses

1. Perceived prisoner's religiosity will significantly predict prisoner's adjustment in such a way that as prisoners' religiosity level increases, prisoners' adjustment increases among inmates.
2. Resilience will significantly mediate the relationships between perceived prisoners' religiosity and prison adjustment among prisoners in such a way that, the introduction of resilience as a mediator will enhance prisoners' adjustment among inmates in South-West, Nigeria.

5. Method

5.1. Research Design and Participants

The study adopted correlational survey design, since the researcher is interested in detecting the presence and strength of a relationship between variables in the current study. The researcher interest is in knowing the relationship and predictive effect of the Religiosity, Resilience on Prisoners' Adjustment.

The population of study comprised representative of all prisoners from the six prison facilities in the southwest part of Nigeria. They are as follows, Akure Medium Prison Olokuta Akure, Ondo State, Ilesha Prison, Osun State, Abeokuta Prison, Ogun State, Agodi prison, Ibadan, Oyo State, Kirikiri Maximum prison, Apapa Lagos State, and Ado-Ekiti Prison, Ekiti State.

5.2. Measures

Four major instruments were used to collect data from the respondents. They include;

Biographic Information Questionnaire: This contains the personal details of participants such as gender, age, religion, academic qualification, marital status, and length of sentence.

Religiosity Scale: The religiosity Affiliation Scale was developed by Omoluabi (1995). It contains twenty items with options of true or false. It is a standardized instrument by Omoluabi (1995), Okunola (1986) and Erinoso (1996). The reliability coefficients are 0.97 and 0.26 respectively. Scoring the items in which the client shaded 'True' will be counted and multiplied by three to get the client's religiosity score. The Cronbach of (α) = .81 was reported for the present study. Scores above the mean score indicate high religiosity, while scores below the mean indicate low religiosity.

Resilience scale: Resilience was measured using a resilience scale (RS-25) developed by Wagnild and Young (1993a) to provide clinicians and researchers with a shorter instrument to reduce participant burden. The RS-14 is a 7- item Likert format scale ranging from (1- strongly disagree to 7- strongly Agree) and some of the sample questions include (1.) I usually manage one way or another. (2) I feel proud that I have accomplished things in life (5.) I feel that I can handle many things at a time. Wagnild and Young (1993a) reported a reliability coefficient of .91 for the original RS. A Cronbach Alpha of (α) = .78 was reported for the present study. The scores above the mean indicate resilient Prisoners, while scores below indicate non-resilient Prisoners.

Prisoner's Adjustment Scale (PAQ): This is a 20-item self-report instrument PAQ developed by Wright (1985). The PAQ assesses perceptions such as prisoners' comfort around inmates, comfort with staff, feelings of anger, frequency of illness, trouble sleeping, fears of being attacked, physical fights, heated arguments with inmates etc. Participants indicated their level of agreement with each item based on a five-point scale, starting from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples of the items include, I have discomfort around fellow inmates, discomfort around staff, understanding rules, having necessary training etc. A score above the mean score indicates positive/better prison adjustment, while a score below the mean score indicates a poor level of prison adjustment. Wright reported a Cronbach alpha of (α) =0.93 with the Guttman Split half reliability (r) =0.89. The pilot study shows Cronbach alpha (α) =.67, but Cronbach (α)-.69 was reported for the present study. PAQ was interpreted in terms of the sum of the total aggregate score of the items. Scores above the mean indicate increased adjustment and scores lower than the mean indicate less adjustment.

5.3. Procedure

Six prison formations were randomly picked from the southwestern zone in Nigeria based on balloting. The choice of even numbers was arrived at via the ballot technique. That is odd and even were wrapped differently and all put together in a box. Individual prisoners were asked to choose among papers with both even and odd numbers written. Prison facilities labelled with even numbers on the list were selected. Approval was earlier obtained from the Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University; which introduced me to the Prison facilities for the research purpose, with this approval; I was able to visit different prisons that were selected for the study. With permission and approval obtained from the respective prison authorities, the researcher used a systematic sampling technique (i.e. odd and even numbers) on the list of inmates provided by each prison official of the selected prisons to choose participants among the inmates that were involved in the research work.

Eighty (80) prisoners were randomly selected through simple balloting from each of the chosen prisons. Hence, four hundred and eighty (480) prisoners were used for the study. However, two (2) questionnaires were not adequately completed, hence the reason for not including them in the processing of the result. Finally, four hundred and seventy-eight (478) questionnaires were adequately completed and returned questionnaires were used for the processing of the result of this study. Male=249 (52.1), Female =229(47.9), Christianity 397(83.1) Islam 81(16.9), Age mean=23.55, SD=3.49, N=478 Gender= mean=1.52, SD=500, N=478, Sentence Period mean=9.44, SD=12.68, N=460, Religion mean=1.17, SD=376, N=478, Prison Environment mean=60.61, SD=16.557, N=478, Religiosity mean=69.04, SD=18.094, N=478, Resilience mean=79.09, SD=13.254, N=478, Prisoner's Adjustment mean=43.89, SD=9.667, N=478, Self-Harm Urges mean=33.29, SD=12.767, N=478.

The three instruments were packaged together as a questionnaire with 3 sections where section A seeks demographic information, Section B, centres on Religiosity while section C, centres on Resilience and section F focus on the prison Adjustment scale. These were administered to the participants by the researcher after necessary permissions have been sought which will give the researcher access to the yards. The instruments were immediately collected after completion. The exercise lasted for six weeks with a week allocated for each prison. However, only one day in the week was used for each prison but no one could predict the very day permission would be granted to interact with the prisoners in the yards, possibly for security reasons.

5.4. Statistical Analysis

Socio-demographic variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis and *t*-test analysis.

6. Results

6.1. Test of Relationship Among the Study Variables

Pearson Product Moment correlation (PPMC) was used to inter-correlate the study variables to ascertain the extent and direction of relationships among them. The result is presented below.

Table-1. Correlation Matrix showing the mean, SD and the Relationship among the Study Variables

1. Age	1						
2. Gender	-.34**	1					
3. Sentence Period	-.01	-.19**	1				
4. Prison Environment	.07	.15**	.05	1			
5. Prison Adjustment	-.01	-.07	-.09	.29**	.19**	1	
6. Self-Harm Urge	-.10*	.16**	-.04	-.19**	-.19**	-.35**	1
Mean	23.55	-	9.44	60.61	59.04	43.89	33.29
SD	3.49	-	13.68	16.56	18.09	9.67	12.77

Perceived religious af.= Perceived religious affiliation **. Note: * p<.01, * <. 0.5, N 478. Gender was coded male 0 female 1.

The result in table 1. shows that the Prisoner's environment significantly correlated with Inmates' adjustment [r = (476) =.29**p <.01], such that, when the prison environment is supportive the prisoner is better adjusted.

Hypothesis 1

Table-2. Showing Prison Environment, Resilience and Religiosity Predicting Prisoners' Adjustment

Variables	β	t	R	R ²	df	F
Prison Environment	.26	5.75**	.34	.11	3, 474	20.27**
Resilience	.18	2.76*				
Religiosity	.13	2.85**				

** p< 0.01, * p < 0.05, N=478

Religiosity significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment β.14, t 2.85', <.01. This implies that religiosity determines an adjustment to Prisoner's environment such that, prisoners who score high on the religiosity scale are better adjusted to the prison environment. Resilience significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment β.18, t 2.25', p<.05 such that, the resilient prisoners are better adjusted to the prison environment, than those who are not resilient.

Table-3. Resilience mediating relationship between Religiosity and Prisoners' Adjustment

Dependent Factor	Predictors	β	t	R	R ²	Df	F
Prisoners' Adjustment	Religiosity	.19	4.26**	.19	.04	1, 476	18.14**
Prisoners' Adjustment	Resilience	.18	3.91**	.18	.03	1, 476	15.32**
Resilience	Religiosity	.31	7.05**	.31	.10	1, 476	49.72**
Prisoners' Adjustment	Religiosity	.15	3.23**	.23	.05	2, 475	13.03**
	Resilience	.13	2.77**				

** p< 0.01, N=478

Religiosity significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment (β .19,t 4.26, p<.01).Resilience significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment (β .18,t 3.91, p<.01).Religiosity significantly predicted Resilience (β .31,t 7.05, p<.01). Religiosity significantly predicted prisoners' adjustment (β .15,t 3.23, p<.01).When Resilience was introduced, the β

reduce to .15 i.e β .15, why the resilience is .13. From the result of the analysis, resilience partially mediated the predictive influence of religiosity on the prisoners' adjustment in the study.

Table-4. Sobel Summary Showing the Strength of Mediation between Religiosity and Prison Adjustment by Resilience

Variables	Z	Std. Error	p
Predictors Religiosity			
Mediator Resilience	2.60	.08	<. 01
Dependent Prison Adjustment			

7. Discussion

The result of the study revealed some connection to previous studies, yet different results were equally established. The result of hypothesis one stated that, Perceived prisoner's religiosity will significantly predict prisoner's adjustment in such a way that prisoners' religiosity level increases, prisoners' adjustment increases among inmates were accepted.

These findings on the predictive effect of religiosity were significant and also consistent with that of existing literature (Koenig *et al.*, 2001; Pargament, 2002) who reported that religion has positive and negative implications for mental health depending upon what type of religion. Rabins *et al.* (1990) found that level of religious belief at baseline was associated with better emotional adjustment among caregivers at two-year follow-up, even when personality variables, family functioning, and levels of anger and guilt were controlled for. Correspondingly, these findings support the earlier study which quantitatively assessed and examined the correlates of religiosity and wellness among family members' caregivers (Rammohan *et al.*, 2002).

Also, the findings support the report where religiosity has also shown, for instance, to have ameliorated the repercussions of childhood poverty on self-esteem (Henderson, 2016). Finally, the findings were in agreement with the cross-cultural universality of the idea that religion bolsters one's self-esteem (Sedikides and Gebauer, 2021).

Hypothesis two which states that resilience will significantly mediate the relationship between prisoners' adjustment and prisoners' religiosity was confirmed. The findings validate the study by Ong *et al.* (2006) who found that resilience mediated the association between stress and negative mood, such that more resilient individuals showed less mood reactivity to and faster mood recovery from daily stressors. The result equally confirm that, resilience and self-esteem acted as mediators between life events and coping styles, as resilience was found to directly mediate life events and coping styles (Juan *et al.*, 2020).

The result established the assertion that resilience is a personality characteristic that mediates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation (Wagnild and Young, 1993b). In addition to having particular personality characteristics, resilient individuals often rely on other factors to help them adjust to difficult times. According to the Resiliency model (Richardson, 2002) individuals experience disruption to their lives when a stressor is encountered, they rely on internal protective factors, such as self-reliance, vigour and good health, as well as external protective factors, such as social networks, to enhance balance in their lives. The findings is likewise validates Ong *et al.* (2006) report that individuals who were more resilient showed less mood reactivity to and faster mood recovery from daily stressors.

7.1. Limitations of the Study

First, a self-reported survey approach was used in the generation of data. This method was chosen to accelerate the collection of a large amount of quantifiable data and to protect the anonymity of the inmates. While survey data is acceptable in studies of this kind, it is recommended that future research utilize a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative techniques and independent sources to verify the survey data. Joseph (2010) comments that while secondary data can be useful, more research needs to be conducted using quantitative data and qualitative methodologies, especially looking at prisoners' adjustment, resilience, and religiosity.

Another limitation of this study is that of respondents' bias, which is common in all survey studies due to respondents' belief in projecting a good image rather than being seen from a different perspective. Similar to other research studies, this project is not without its inadequacy. For instance, the sample size used for this research work may not guarantee generalization on this subject matter, to be true representatives of the entire number of prison inmates we have in Nigeria prison facilities and by implication, the result of this work should be generalised with caution.

It is imperative to state here that, only prison facilities from the South-West were randomly selected, and this only represents a fraction of the entire prison facilities in the country. Due to the relative simplicity of this analysis, there is always the possibility of omitting relevant variables. However, aside from these limitations, this study represents one of the largest population-based studies of self-harm among this category of people.

8. Conclusion

These results revealed that there is a need for proper adjustment on the part of inmates for them to be able to serve their jail terms. Hence, to add value to the prison ideal of rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration, effort and resources should be tailored to individual inmates rather than the total inmate population. This can start when offenders enter the prison by using sensitive psychological battery testing to help identify inmates who require specialized needs and place them into the correct program.

These programs would contain the proper resources needed to specifically deal with and address unique inmate problems. Inmates who receive specific treatment regimens may see the criminal justice system as made up of an individual rather than a number, and by so doing help them in adjusting to the prison environment,

Recommendation

The findings proved relevant to the Nigerian prison situation. Based on the above, the following recommendations were made;

The government as a matter of necessity may need to take into consideration the significant roles of faith-based programs since it is an enhancer of quality of life among prison inmates as evidenced in this study. The program is essential for a psychologically well-adjusted prison inmate. The result equally suggested that resilience is not a permanent capacity but is a dynamic construct, thus, resiliency is driven by secondary needs and the extent to which this need is met, shapes the overall behaviour of inmates, therefore it is recommended that psychological intervention and training program should be put in place in various prison facilities within Nigeria so that the prison inmates could develop problem-solving skills which will eventually enhance the prison inmates' resilience level to mitigate against self-harm among prison inmates and encourage prisoners' adjustment. The result also reveals that resilience and prison environment cyclically reinforce one another; this is because the prisoner can look at the better side of every event happening in his life, even the ones that are considered negative.

Finally, a performance indicator is to be developed to help the management of correctional facility gauge and evaluate the success of inmate resilience and emotional wellbeing. Meanwhile, further studies on adjustment and self-harm urge are required, especially if psychological factors such as personality types, emotional regulation, and emotional intelligence is considered.

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