

RECIDIVISM: A CORRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS IN FAMILIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated recidivism and its relationships with social discrimination and challenges of socioeconomic status in families in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two objectives and two hypotheses were generated for the study. The study adopted the survey design in its investigation. The study was based in Rivers State, and its population covered members of all families who have or show evidence of a recidivist or recidivists in Rivers State. A sample of 600 respondents was randomly selected for study. The simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed. The data collection was done through the use of the questionnaire and the instrument was face validated by professionals in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Choba. Also, the reliability value of 0.88 Correction Co-efficient was established for the study. Biographic data of the respondents were analysed using percentage and a frequency table while the hypotheses for the study were tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The analyses revealed that social discrimination against families and challenges of socioeconomic status significantly correlated with recidivism in Rivers State. Thus, the study recommended, among other things, that the community and religious leaders should organize town hall meetings and seminars respectively to encourage and sensitize members of society on the need to accept and show love to families of recidivists and recidivists, and also try work to support the positive reintegration of ex-offenders into communities. This support could be pursued morally, financially, as well as through the use of religious re-orientation. These steps could stop the tide of recidivism in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Recidivism, Correlation, Social Discrimination, Challenges of Socioeconomic Status, Families

INTRODUCTION

Recidivism is the habit or act of relapsing into crime. In other words, it is a relapse, or return to a specific behaviour, generally in a negative context (Conklin, 2022). Recidivism has become a global issue, and regrettably too, the increase in recidivism has not only impacted negatively on the recidivists themselves but has also affected the immediate society very adversely. The increase in recidivism in modern times can be traced to high level of unemployment, lack of classification of inmates and psychological trauma of recidivists. Other factors include poor health facilities and lack of teaching aids to train the inmates to avoid reoffending as well as, inadequate personnel to train these inmates in correctional centres. These and many other factors have continued to contribute to high rate of recidivism in many countries of the world.

Nigeria being part of the global village is not immune to the challenges of recidivism. In Nigeria, the causes of recidivism are basically located in the corpus of justice system of the country. These include carrying out punishments without the rehabilitation of offenders, poor funding, inadequate health facilities, highly dilapidated correctional centres, inadequate trained personnel, among other factors. It is, therefore, based on the multi-dimensional causative factors that Musa (2016) argued that criminal recidivism is a holistic phenomenon because of the interplay between institution, social and individual personality factors. It is therefore, in an attempt to interrogate some related aspects

of these factors that this study investigates recidivism as a relationship with social discrimination and challenges of socioeconomic status in families in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Recidivism has not been a major problem in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the world over. This is so because the cutting edge industrialization couple with the growth and development of artificial intelligence as well as connected economic era was not prominent in the world. In fact today, with the new era of expanded economies, the foregoing have become prominent, in so far that there are cases of robbery, rape, financial embezzlement, terrorism, ethnic killings and internet crime waves for which have spurred recidivism in the world. Nigeria being part of the global community is also battling with repeated and first offending crimes.

Indeed, to curb crime or recidivism is to identify the predictors along with the gap in the study area. Drawing from this, Kaplan Nussio (2018) explained that factors such as antisocial personality traits, weak family ties, lack of educational attainments, and the presence of criminal groups are most highly correlated with various kinds of recidivism and hold implications for programmes and policies to successfully reintegrate ex – combatants into society. In a study of the Factors Associated with Recidivism at a South African Forensic Psychiatric Hospital by Morgan and Del Fabbro (2018); it was revealed that substance – use disorder and antisocial personality disorder are associated with higher risk for recidivism, and patients noted to display adverse social behaviour in the ward posed a potentially high risk for reoffended.

Apart from these facts, Karl – Hanson and Morton - Bourgon (2004) in their study entitled Predictors Meta – Analysis 2004 – 02 confirmed that deviant sexual interests and antisocial orientation as important predictors of sexual recidivism. Also, antisocial orientation (e.g., unstable lifestyle, history of rule violation) was a particular important predictor of violent non – social recidivism. In spite of the above studies, none has fundamentally addressed the correlation between social discrimination and recidivism as well as correlation between of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism along with issues of location which this study seeks to establish in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are delineated for the study:

- i. To investigate the relationship between social discrimination against families and recidivism in Rivers State.
- ii. To ascertain the relationship between challenges of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism in Rivers State.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are stated for the study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between social discrimination against families and recidivism in Rivers State.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between challenges of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Correlation between Social Discrimination and Recidivism

Social discrimination is one of the major challenges faced by ex-prisoners when they return to their society. This, according to Ahmed (2023) could have an adverse effect on criminal recidivism. In a related observation, Thornton (2018) who carried out a study entitled The Effects of Institutional Discrimination on the Successful Reentry of Ex-offenders reported that there is a positive correlation between institutional discrimination and recidivism within the first twelve (12) months of corrections

of a felony and / or release from a correctional facility. Thornton (2018) came to this conclusion when he examined the links between recidivism and employment, housing and educational discrimination as well as denied access to social services. The study further reported that institutional discrimination has a devastating impact on the successful reentry of ex-offenders.

Also, in their study entitled "Prison, Stigma, Discrimination and Personality as Predictors of Criminal Recidivism: Preliminary Findings" Ahmed and Ahmed (2015:1) found that:

Prison, stigma and discrimination were found to have effects on criminal recidivism as the respondents revealed based on their experiences and that such predictors if experienced can give a room for further reoffending whereas personality as predictor was found not have much impact on recidivism among the ex-prisoners in metropolitan Kano in Nigeria.

Kurma (2011) in a related investigation averred that certain psychological problems (i.e. anxiety, depression, addiction, aggressive personality traits) and labelling, discrimination and marginalization, false witness and peer pressure constitute the main causes of reoffending. One of these psychological causes is discrimination, which today is a major cause of recidivism in Nigeria. This is truly the case because the Boko Haram terrorists who were sentenced and later pardoned are usually labelled terrorists and are discriminated in the North of Nigeria; the result of which made the terrorists unable to cope with members of the society, and as a way out, they resorted to the same and/or similar crimes. In fact, if this discrimination does not abate, the terrorist recidivists will continue to sink deeper in the 'maze of recidivism'. The option or remedy, therefore, is for members of society to re-orient themselves and begin to accept these ex-offenders as reformed persons in correctional centres.

Also, highlighting the ordeals of these ex-convicts, Schneider (2020) explained that ex-prisoners around the world are not free from stigma and discrimination upon release from prison in many areas of life. It is because of this discriminatory attitude of members of society towards ex-convicts that Hirschfield and Piquero (2010) noted that how ex-prisoners are received and treated by society upon release critically influences reintegration success. It is clearly along this line that the result from the study conducted by Xu, *et al.* (2023) in China, entitled the Effect of Perceived Discrimination on Social Alienation of Probation revealed that perceived discrimination is positively correlated with social alienation. This result was made after age, gender, educational background, marital status and social support were controlled. This study also revealed that the sense of shame plays a partial positive mediating role in the relationship between perceived discrimination and social alienation.

Apart from these factors or predictors so far discussed, racial discrimination and other forms of discriminations have been found as predictors of recidivism in many parts of the world. In line with this view, Folorunsho (2019) in his study of Race as a Predictor of Recidivism Risk: An Epidemiological Analysis found that race is a significant risk factor in some kinds of recidivism, but not in others, and also that being African –American is not universally associated with higher recidivism risk. Also, in accord with the findings of Folorunsho (2019), Crime and Justice Research Alliance (CFRA) (2018) also asserted or explained that the most potent predictor of recidivism was being a Black male, even though Black men had less contact with the criminal justice system and few of the risk factors traditionally associated with recidivism.

Also, a study carried out by Jung *et. al.* (2010), entitled Recidivism and Survival Time: Racial Disparity among Jail Ex-inmates also showed a similar result. The study found that the overall three-year recidivism rate was 55.9%, and that Black men recidivated at a significantly higher rate than White men. Survival analysis also attested to racial disparity in recidivism, and it revealed that Black

men recidivated in a shorter time frame than their White peers with the covariates age at release and length of stay in jail controlled (Jung *et. al.*, 2010).

Correlationship between Challenges of Socioeconomic Status in Families and Recidivism

Unhealthy socio-economic situation could engender criminal behaviour in the home, especially as it concerns the young members of the family. This could add up to explain why Gucwa-Porebska (2019) averred that dysfunctionality of the family environment undoubtedly influences the emergence of criminal behaviour and, consequently, recidivism. Recidivism has been a serious issue as of concern to many scholars, and its occurrences have been tied to many factors including social as well as financial status of members of the families of the recidivists.

Most probably, it is in response to investigating the connection between socio-economic status and recidivism that Morenoff and Harding (2011) carried out a study entitled Neighborhoods, Recidivism, and Employment among Returning Prisoners. In fact, among other results, the study found that there is the high prevalence among returning prisoners of recidivism, unemployment and low-wage jobs among employees who are working (Morenoff and Harding,2011). This result, at least, confirms that low socioeconomic status could readily predispose ex-convicts to recidivism, as it were.

Similarly, Oruta (2016) also argued that socioeconomic factors such as gender, age, level of education, employment status and housing influence the possibility of re-offending. Naturally, this may be worsened in families where the foregoing factors are severed. They may affect the first offender negatively to further commit the same or similar crimes in society.

Also, in line with the studies already discussed, Holtfreter *et. al.* (2004) carried out a study entitled Poverty, State Capital, and Recidivism among Women Offender. The study and analysis was carried out in the following way:

Two self-report recidivism measures were used in the analysis. Re - arrest was coded as a dummy variables; it indicated whether the subject reported that she had been arrested between the initials and second interview. The second outcome measure, "violation" was also coded a as dummy variable; it reflected whether the subject reported that she had violated her probation or parole conditions during the study period. Independent variables were "minority", "education", "poverty" (annual legal household income below the designated poverty threshold) and "risk". Logistic regression was selected as the primary modelling technique. (Holtfreter *et. al.*,2004:1).

At the end of it all, the result showed that poverty status increased the odds nearest by a factor of 4.6, and it also increase the odds of supervision violation by a factor of 12.7 (Holtfreter *et. al.*,2004:1). These results, in effect, confirm that, even with women, the low income or poverty status is a predisposing factor to recidivism.

Steen *et. al.* (2009), as well, observed that the rates of incarceration and recidivism are influenced by economics, family dynamics, demographics, and race. Their position shows that, among other things, recidivism has a strong relationship with socioeconomic factors. Put differently, this means that the socioeconomic status of the families of recidivists or of the recidivists themselves has some serious implications for recidivism as a phenomenon. Additionally, Wang'Ombe (2019) in a study entitled Influence of Socio – demographic Characteristics of Juvenile Recidivists on Their Reoffending found that the negative peer influence and level of education reached influence the child offender's social and demographic characteristics respectively in Kiambu and Kirinyaga counties of Kenya.

Accordingly, Baker *et. al.* (2022:1) in their study, entitled "Childhood Family and Neighborhood Socioeconomic status, Psychopathy, and Adult Criminal Behaviour" found that:

Childhood family socioeconomic status and psychopathic trait scores each independently predicted the number of adult arrests. As expected, lower childhood family socioeconomic status and childhood family neighbourhood socioeconomic status predicted a larger number of adult arrests, and higher psychopathic trait scores were associated with a greater number of adult arrests. Childhood family socioeconomic status and childhood neighbourhood socioeconomic status also interacted with psychopathic trait scores to predict adult arrests. For individuals with low psychopathic trait scores, lower childhood family socioeconomic status each predicted a higher number of adult arrests, whereas this was not the case for individuals with high psychopathic trait scores.

In all, this investigation shows whether with lower childhood family socioeconomic status or lower childhood family neighbourhood socioeconomic status, the socioeconomic status of people generally is a predictor or a predisposing factor to crime offending as well as recidivism.

METHODOLOGY

Survey design was used for the study. The population of the study covered Rivers State. Specifically, this covered population of members of all families who have an account or evidence of a recidivist or recidivists in Rivers State. A sample of 600 respondents was randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through the use of simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. This simple random sampling technique was used to select one Local Government Area (LGA) in Rivers State that served as the area of study. The 23 LGAs of Rivers State were written on pieces of papers and these papers were completely folded by the researcher; and they were put in a basket for picking. A paid research assistant was called upon to shake up the folded papers of 23 LGAs for the purpose of choosing one LGA as the area of study. Through this process the person called upon, to do the picking, picked Port Harcourt LGA of Rivers State for the study.

Also, respondents were independently selected using purposive sampling technique. In this way, 600 respondents were selected in Port Harcourt LGA. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. It was structured into Section A: biographic data with multiple questions (items) based on age, sex, religion, level of social discrimination against members of families and level of challenges of socioeconomic status in families; and Section B which carries field responses on the correlations between social discrimination along with challenges of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism in Rivers State, using modified four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) rated 4, Agreed (A) rated 3, Disagreed (D) rated 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) rated 1. Face validity of the instrument was established by professionals in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Choba. In addition, test-retest method of reliability was used to establish the reliability value of 0.88 Correlation Co-efficient for the study. The researcher administered the copies of the questionnaire with the help of his paid assistants; and the copies of the questionnaire were collected as soon as the responses were completed by respondents. The statistical methods used for the study were percentage and a frequency table, as well as Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Percentage and a frequency table were used to analyze biographic data of respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse the tested hypotheses for the study.

Results

The results of the study are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. Table 1 results deal with biographic data of respondents while Tables 2 and 3 deal with tested hypotheses for the study.

Table 1: Biographic Data of Respondents

Biographic Data	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Age		
20-39	336	56
40-59	168	28
60-79	96	16
	600	100
Sex		
Males	300	50
Females	300	50
	600	100
Religion		
Christianity	300	50
Islamic Religion	168	28
Others	132	22
	600	100
Level of Social Discrimination against Members of Families		
High	348	58
Moderate	132	22
Low	120	20
	600	100
Level of Challenges of Socioeconomic Status in Families		
High	348	58
Moderate	156	26
Low	96	16
	600	100

Source: Orijji's (2023), Fieldwork

The results of age indicate that 336 respondents, representing 56% were between ages of 20years and 39years, and these respondents came from families that have one to five recidivists; 168(28%) were between ages of 40years and 59years, while 96(16%) were between ages of 60years and 79years in the study area. 168(28%) and 96(16%) of respondents were from families that have one to three recidivists and one recidivist respectively. This breakdown makes the total number of 600 respondents in the study area. For sex, the results delineate 300 male respondents, representing 50% of the populations and another 300(50%) were female respondents.

For religion, the study involved 300 respondents as Christians, representing 50% of the study population, 168(28%) were Muslims, while 132(22%) were members of other religious organizations. This shows that Christian respondents participated more in the study than Muslims

and members of other religious organizations because the study area is predominantly Christian, and they had more families of recidivists than others. For level of social discrimination against members of families, the results show that 348 respondents, representing 58% were from those families who experienced high social discrimination, 132(22%) were those who had experienced moderate social discrimination against their families, while 120(20%) were those who experienced low social discrimination against families in the study area.

Finally, for level of challenges of socioeconomic status in families, the results depict that 348 respondents, representing 58% were respondents who had high level of challenges of socioeconomic status during the course of the study, 156(26%) had moderate challenges of socioeconomic status, while 96(16%) had contrary opinion; hence they are considered as having low challenges of same in the study area due to little pressure from recidivists in families.

Table 2: Analysis of the Correlation between Social Discrimination against Families and Recidivism in Rivers State

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Unemployment Among recidivists	10705	23464		
			297463	*0.64
Recidivism	10995	54655		

*Significant at 0.05 level, critical $r = .062$, degree of freedom (df) = 598.

Source: Oriji's (2023), Fieldwork

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated r value of 0.64 is higher than the critical r value of .062 at significant level of .05 with 598 df. With this result, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social discrimination against families and recidivism is rejected. Based on the foregoing result, it means that social discrimination against families is significantly related to recidivism in Rivers State.

Table 3: Analysis of the Correlation between Challenges of Socioeconomic Status in Families and Recidivism in Rivers State

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Unemployment Among recidivists	10704	24564		
			267463	*0.45
Recidivism	10998	54655		

*Significant at 0.05 level, critical $r = .062$, df = 598.

Source: Oriji's (2023), Fieldwork

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 3 depicts that the calculated r value of 0.45 is higher than the critical r value of .062 at significant level of .05 with 598 df. With this result, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between challenges of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism is rejected. This result therefore means that challenges of socioeconomic status in families are significantly related to recidivism in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the first hypothesis revealed that there is a significant relationship between social discrimination against families and recidivism in the study area. This result was supported by Ahmed (2023) who explained that social discrimination is one of the major challenges faced by the ex-

prisoners when they return to their society in which case he claimed that this could have an adverse effect on criminal recidivism. Also, the result of the first hypothesis is consistent with Ahmed and Ahmed (2015:1) in their study entitled "Prison, Stigma, Discrimination and Personality as Predictors of Criminal Recidivism: Preliminary Findings" which revealed that:

Prison, stigma and discrimination were found to have effect on criminal recidivism as the respondents revealed based on their experiences and that such predictors if experienced can give a room for further re offending whereas personality as predictor was found not have much impact on recidivism among the ex-prisoners in metropolitan Kano in Nigeria.

In addition, the result of the second hypothesis depicts that there is a significant correclationship between challenges of socioeconomic status in families and recidivism in the study area. The result of the second hypothesis is in tandem with the explanation of Oruta (2016) that socioeconomic factors such as gender, age, level of education, employment status and housing influence the possibility of reoffending. Also, the result of second hypothesis affirmed Steen *et. al.* (2009) view that the rates of incarceration and recidivism are influenced by economics, family dynamics, demographics, and race.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is obvious that social discrimination against families and challenges of socioeconomic status correlate with recidivism in the study area. There is, therefore, the urgent need to work or device some means to stemming or at least, reducing the incidences of recidivism for the purpose of engendering a crime-free society for socio-economic development. In view of these facts, this study urges or encourages more studies on such areas as the relationship between personality traits and the level of recidivism, as well as, the relationship between weak family and the level of reoffending in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The community and religious leaders should organize town hall meetings and seminars respectively to encourage and sensitize members of society on the need to accept and show love to families of recidivists and recidivists, and also try work to support the positive reintegration of ex-offenders into communities. They can assist such re-integration morally, financially and as well through the religious teachings and re-orientation.
- ii. State Government should organize workshops and skill acquisition schemes to teach and technically train ex-offenders on skills that will help them meet their financial challenges in society. In this case, the State Government should fund the schemes adequately, and also employ qualified personnel, so that appropriate results that would help reduce or completely stem the increasing level of recidivism in society.
- iii. The State Government should fund correctional centres by rebuilding the facilities, providing functional equipment for training, and engaging qualified inmate care personnel that will help manage the criminal justice system in the study area. With this, the recidivists will be open to a new lease of life that will be opposed to criminality and recidivism in society.
- iv. The state government, in conjunction with concerned private organizations, should support law enforcement agencies with working aids such as patrol fans, stationery, and other necessary facilities for better working conditions. With the measures put in place, the law enforcement agencies would be able to reduce crime and the increasing level of recidivists to the barest minimum in the study area.

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