

## AGGRESSIVE AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG PRISON INMATES OF LAFIA PRISON, NASARAWA STATE

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### Abstract

*The study examined the aggressive (hostility) and criminal behaviour among convicted male and female prison inmates of Lafia prison, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A sample of 147 participants drawn from Correctional Unit (Lafia Prison); 102 male and 45 female inmates were involved, their age ranged from 18 to 50 years. Simple random sampling technique was used to ensure equal representation. Psychopathic Deviate Scale (PD-Scale) and Multiple Affect Adjective Check (MAACL) were used for the collection of data. The independent t-test was used at 0.05 significant level. The result shows that  $t=2.20$ , Mean=21.95,  $df=145$ ,  $P<0.05$  for male criminality; and  $t=1.29$ , Mean=20.24,  $df=145$ ,  $P<0.05$  for female criminality. Also,  $t=.81$ , mean=9.42,  $df=145$ ,  $P<0.05$  for male aggressive behaviour; and  $t=.64$ , mean=7.20,  $df=145$ ,  $P<0.05$  for female aggressive behaviour. The result showed that a statistical significant difference was observed between male and female aggressive (hostile) and criminal behaviour among convicted prison inmates serving in Lafia prison, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Psychologists should be encouraged in prisons service to provide necessary behaviour modification and therapy for the prison inmates before they are discharged to the society.*

**Keywords:** aggressive behaviour, criminal behaviour, prison inmates, chromosomal abnormalities, mental health status.

## **Introduction**

Aggressive behaviour is common not only in the society but also among the prison inmates. Aggressive human behaviour is a result of specific emotion such as anger or irritation and instrument to satisfying needs, or an implicit requirement of particular tasks (goal centre aggression). Studies suggested that inmates in the prisons settings display higher habitual aggressive behaviour than controlled groups, probably because of aggressive mode at home and in some cultural groups (Ireland & Archer, 2002; Bushman, Ridge, Das, key & Busath, 2007). More so, people are more likely to be hostile towards individuals perceived as dissimilar, and the prison setting encourages one to differentiate oneself subjectively from other inmates. Ireland & Archer (2002) argued that prisons fosters aggression and criminal behaviour because it deprived inmates of basic psychological needs (e.g., security, inter-sexual relationship, friends, relations, unconducive environment, frustration among others), and thereby provokes such negative emotions as anger and anxiety. Furthermore, the social norms of inmates' subculture favor aggression and criminal acts as a basic firm of interaction, influencing the social perception of incarcerated inmates. Overly punitive approaches use on violent, angry criminals or prisons inmates only provides breeding ground for more anger or aggressive behaviour and more violent in the prison setting by inmates (Schmitz, 2003).

In addition, poor diet, mental illness, bad brain chemistry, and even evolutionary rewards are contributing variables for aggressive and criminal behavior. However, social learning theory by Albert Bandura believed that aggression and criminal behaviours, such as sexual assault, raping, hurting, and bullying and so on, are learned through a process called behaviour modeling. He believed that inmates or individuals do not actually inherit violence tendencies, but they modelled them through observing other inmates, either personally or through the environment (Bandura, 1962). Frustration Aggression Theory believed that aggression is a natural reaction to the frustration (blocking of important motives, such as inter-sexual relationship, friends, relations, security, etc) or reaction to anything aversive- from pains to intense heat is said to increase the likelihood of aggression (Correia, 2009). Cognitive theorists believe that our beliefs strongly influence the likelihood that we will commit violence or inmates will commit violence act among themselves in the prisons (Bushman et al, 2007; Eidelson, & Eidelson, 2003).

An empirical analysis of gender difference in crimes among inmates argued that boys are more likely to become aggressive than girl inmates because they are less strictly controlled and are called to be aggressive and active risk seekers, all characteristics likely to bring success to the aggressive and criminals (Tehrani&Mednick, 2002). The researchers revealed that a particular form of

gene, which control aspects of dopamine and serotonin inhibits Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is associated with high aggressive, violent behaviours and symptoms of impulsivity among male inmate criminals than their female counterparts. Lowenstein (2003), lends support to the roles of both dopamine and serotonin in aggressive and criminal behaviours. Ireland and Archer (2002) found a number of differences between gender; male inmates were significantly more likely to report positive outcomes of aggression than were female inmates. Another study found that most male prison inmates are associated with XYY chromosomes patterns, which is attributed to aggressive, violent nature and criminal behaviour (Morley & Hall, 2003). The study recommended that those with XYY were “best hospitalized due to an increased likelihood of aggressive and criminal behaviour among inmates in prisons”. These inmates with extra Y chromosome were found in harming, hurting and raping other inmates in prisons. They researchers added that female inmates were more likely than male inmates to report verbal bullying, gossiping, and ostracizing, whereas male inmates were more likely than female inmates to report physical assaults, raping and to identify sex offenders.

The objective of the study is to explore aggressive and criminal behaviour among convicted prison inmates of Lafia Prison, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. In order to achieve this aim, the study therefore presents the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>:** Male inmates will be more prone to criminal behaviour than their female inmates' counterparts.
- H<sub>2</sub>:** Male inmates will be more aggressive (Hostile) than their female counterparts.

## **Method**

### ***Research Design***

Survey research design was adopted, which enabled the researcher to move to the study area and administered the instrument to the participants who are prison inmates in Lafia Prison, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### **Participants**

The total of 147 inmates of Lafia prison took part in the study. Out of this, 102 were male and 45 were female. Their age range was between 18 and 50 years. The participants in the study were randomly selected from the convicted prison inmates. The sample drawn covered those serving the short-term and long-term prison sentence. Randomization was done by writing Yes and No in pieces of papers with 147 yes. Those participants who picked Yes were automatically selected for the study.

### **Instruments**

Two instruments were used. These are:

**Multiple Affect Adjective Check (MAACL)** is a 132-item scale designed by Zuckerman and Lubin (1965) for the purpose of assessing aggressive (hostile) behaviour with original psychometric properties given as .36. It was restandardized for Nigerian sample with a reliability of .31. However, the researcher adopted 26 items part of MAACL that measures hostility; 12 items measures positive hostility while 14 items measures negative hostility for the purpose of this study.

**Psychopathic Deviate Scale (PD-Scale)** is a 72-item scale designed by Hathaway and Mckinley (1967) for the purpose of assessing criminal behaviour among western criminal communities with original psychometric properties given as .80. It was restandardized by Ivor (1984) for Nigerian sample with a reliability of .57.

### **Procedure**

Data were collected using PD-Scale and MAACL after permission was obtained from the prison controller. With the help of prison officers the researchers met the entire population of the inmates, and introduced himself including the purpose of the study. The participating inmates gave their consent by filling the Informed Consent Form administered to them through the assistance of the prison officers. Participation was on voluntary basis and inmates were assured of confidentiality of their responses. The researcher sampled the willing participants and administered the scales. One hour was allotted for the participants to respond to the scales in order to maintain reliability and validity of the instrument. However, some participants demanded clarification and 30 minutes was used by the researcher for explanation. The responded questionnaires were collected and the researcher appreciated the inmates.

### **Data Analysis**

The study used the t-test independent sample in order to measure the level of differences in aggressive and criminal behaviour among convicted male and female inmates in Lafia prisons. The corresponding t-test value was obtained at the 0.05 level of significance to ascertain differences.

## Result

**Table 1: The summary of t-test showing the differences in criminal behaviour between male and female inmates**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P(Sig)
Male	102	31.95	8.33	2.20		.332
Female	45	20.24	6.95	1.29	145	.201

### Summary and Interpretation

Male Mean=31.95 and Female Mean=20.24

Male Number=102 and Female Number=45

Male SD=8.33 and Female SD=6.95

Male t=2.20 and Female t=1.29

df=145; P<0.05.

Hence, we agree to accept the hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>)

**Table 2: Below is the summary of t-test table showing the differences in aggressive (hostile) behaviour between male and female inmates**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P(Sig)
Male	102	9.42	2.08	.81		.539
Female	45	7.20	1.85	.64	145	.522

### Summary and Interpretation

Male Mean=9.42 and Female Mean=7.20

Male Number=102 and Female Number=45

Male SD=2.08 and Female SD=1.85

Male t=.81 and Female t=.64

df=145; P<0.05.

Hence, we agree to accept the hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>)

## Discussion

The finding on the first hypothesis shows that significant difference was observed in the level of criminal behaviour between male and female prison inmates. Male (N=102, =21.95, SD=8.33, t=2.20, df=145, P<0.05) and Female (N=45, =20.24, SD=6.95, t=1.29, df=145, P<0.05). Hence, hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) was accepted. This implies that there was difference in the level of criminal behaviour between the male and female prison inmates with the male inmates scoring higher than the female. Schmitz (2003), found a relationship between aggressive, violent and criminal behaviour among 153 male inmates diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The researcher concluded that abnormal secretion of serotonin is associated ADHD, which result to aggressive, violent

behaviors among inmate male criminals. This is inline with Tehrani and Mednick's (2002), who found gender difference in crimes among inmates, arguing that boys are more likely to become aggressive than girl inmates because they are less strictly controlled and are called to be aggressive and active risk seekers; all characteristics.

The second hypothesis which states that male inmates will be more aggressive (hostile) than their female counterparts. Hence, the current study revealed that difference was observed in the level of aggressive behaviour (hostile) between male and female prison inmates in Lafia prison. Aggressive Male (N=102,  $\bar{M}=9.42$ , SD=2.08,  $t=.81$ ,  $df=145$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) and Female (N=45,  $\bar{M}=7.20$ , SD=1.85,  $t=.64$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Hence, the hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was accepted because differences were observed between male inmates having more hostility than their female counterparts. The men inmates in prisons had a surprising number of XYY chromosomes patterns than their female counterparts (Morley & Hall, 2003) which make them to score higher on aggressive scale. The researchers attributed the inmates' aggressive and violent nature to this extra Y chromosome. These inmates with extra Y chromosome found were found raping other inmates in prisons (Joseph, 2001). Morley & Hall, (2003) therefore recommended that those with XYY chromosomes were "best hospitalized due to an increased likelihood of aggressive and criminal behaviour among inmates in prisons". Furthermore, Tehrani and Mednick (2002), maintained that there was significant evidence of age related variation in the strength of differences with deviant peer affiliation having greater influence on younger male inmates than older male inmates against female inmates. However, Joseph (2001) in another study found that female inmates were more likely than male inmates to report verbal bullying, gossiping, and ostracizing and were significantly more likely than male inmates to identify introvert (69.6% vs 15.9% respectively), younger inmates (30.4% vs 8.5% respectively), and first- time inmates (21.7% vs 4.9% respectively) as victims; whereas male inmates were more likely than female inmates to report physical assaults, raping and were significantly more likely than female inmates to identify sex offenders (46.3% vs 4.4% respectively). Lowenstein (2003), argued that the long-term prisoners experienced strong influence to the roles of both dopamine and serotonin in causing aggressive and criminal behaviour. The rate of suicide and death is shown to increase among the long-term male inmates than the short-term inmates (Lester, 1997).

### **Conclusion**

The study provided available research findings on aggressive and criminal behaviour among prison inmates of Lafia prison, Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Significant difference in the level of aggressive (hostile) and criminal behaviour among male and female prison inmates was found.

Chromosomal abnormalities of XYY patterns and increase in the secretion of dopamine and serotonin also serve as contributory factor in causing aggressive and criminal behaviour among prison inmates. This causes hyperactivity of aggressive and criminal behaviours ranging from bullying, gossiping, physical assaults, raping, suicide and death among prison inmates. Also, long-term serving inmates develop psychological and emotional trauma due to long-term exposure to the prison environment makes them too aggressive. The Clinical Psychologists have a great role of administering the General Health Questionnaire-GHQ 12 (Joseph, 2001) and conducting Mental Health Examination (MHE) for the evaluation and diagnosis of psychological and mental health status of the inmates in order to reduce the rate of aggressive and criminal behaviour among the prison inmates. This call to behaviour modification of prison inmates before discharged to the society.

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**Acknowledgement**

I wish to acknowledge the support and effort of my co-author (AkalaIwa Bernard), my mentors (Assoc. Prof. Andrew E. Zamani, Prof. Amechi Nweze, Dr. Ochanye, O. Ojiji, Mr. Atama Harri), and most importantly the authors whose work have been cited in the course of bringing this work to conclusion. I therefore wish to declare that the authors personally funded the research.

**Declaration**

I declared that the manuscript have not been previously published or currently under consideration for publication anywhere.