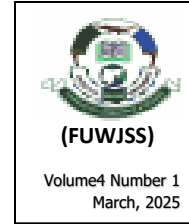


TRAUMA RESILIENCE AND DISTRESS DISCLOSURE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG INMATES OF CORRECTIONAL CENTRES IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study investigates trauma resilience and distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates of Correctional Centres in Taraba State. The study used cross-sectional survey design involving 290 inmates of correctional centres in Taraba State consisting of: Jalingo MSCC, Wukari MSCC, Gembu MSCC, Serti MSCC, Takum SCF, K/Lamido SCF, Zing SCF, Gassol SCF, M/Biyu SCF, Baissa SCF, Bali SCF and Lau. The age of respondents ranged from 27–66 years with an average age of 47.77 years ($SD=13.71$). the respondents consists of 242 (83.4%) males, 48 (16.6%) females. The proportionate sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. The study results indicated that trauma resilience is a significant indicator of psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. [$R=.479$, $R^2=.229$, $F(1,288)=433.501$, $p<.001$]. Also, the result indicates that distress disclosure is a significant determinant of psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. [$R=.289$, $R^2=.083$, $F(1,288)=26.217$, $<.001$]. The study concludes that there is a significant influence of distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State indicating that as inmates increases their level of disclosing their distress, their level of psychological adjustment also increases and vice versa. The study recommends that Correctional officers should offer peer mentorship programmes to help convicts support one another, these networks can help inmates share their emotions and build resilience, allowing them to learn from one another's experiences.

Key Words: Trauma, distress disclosure, psychological adjustment, inmates, correctional centres

Introduction

The incarceration of individuals in Correctional Centers is a complex issue that has significant implications for their psychological well-being. Research has shown that a large number of inmates have experienced traumatic events prior to their incarceration. It is obvious that resilience is one of the factors that influence psychological adjustment among inmates. Studies have shown that resilience is in most cases mediated by certain factors such as distress disclosure and self-blame (Barrita & Wong-Padoongpatt, 2023). Distress disclosure can serve as a mediator in the relationship between trauma resilience and psychological adjustment. Distress disclosure refers to the extent to which individuals are willing to share their traumatic experiences with others (Bonnar-White, Hetzel-Riggin, Diamond-Welch, & Tollini, 2018). Since the establishment of the correctional system in Nigeria, the issue of inmate adaptation has been a significant concern. The peculiar problems faced by prisoners in Nigeria are multifaceted and stem from systemic issues in the criminal justice system, socio-economic challenges, and poor governance. Many inmates, especially those awaiting trial, lack access to legal counsel due to poverty.

These issues are undoubtedly present in correctional facilities throughout Taraba State as well. Most of the aforementioned adjustment related challenges faced by inmates in correctional centers in Taraba State can be traumatic, however, it is undeniably true that not every inmate suffers the psychological consequences of these traumatic experiences. Some of them may exhibit a remarkable ability to maintain a sense of emotional balance and adjust easily while others may struggle. Additional challenges include the poor quality and insufficient quantity of food, unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions that can lead to the spread of infectious diseases, delayed access to medical care, demanding physical labor, and abuse from more senior inmates. These issues not only violate the rights and dignity of prisoners but also exacerbate health risks, psychological distress, and recidivism.

Several measures have been introduced in Nigeria to address the problems faced by prisoners by the government. However, many of these initiatives have either failed or yielded limited results due to systemic challenges, corruption, and poor implementation. With sustained commitment, collaboration, and resource allocation, the psychological well-being of prisoners in Nigeria can be significantly improved. If this trend continues, Nigeria may face legal challenges at international human rights bodies or pressure from foreign governments and organizations if prison conditions remain dire. Addressing these problems requires urgent action, including prison decongestion, improved facilities, robust rehabilitation

programs, and systemic judicial reforms to prevent long-term societal damage.

Much study has been conducted on psychological adjustment among inmates but variables like distress disclosure, self-blame and trauma resilience among inmates have not been vindicated in the area of study. This created a gap to be filled by the research. It is against this background, the study set out to examine how distress disclosure and self-blame influence the relationship between trauma resilience and psychological adjustment among inmates in correctional centers in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Trauma Resilience and Psychological Adjustment among Inmates

Trauma is a devastating experience for individuals and communities alike (Walsh, 2007). It can lead to long-lasting psychological and physical health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders (Sun, et al., 2021). However, not all individuals who experience trauma develop these disorders. Some individuals demonstrate remarkable resilience to adversity or trauma resilience (Mancini & Bonanno, 2010). Trauma resilience refers to the ability of individuals to adapt positively to adversity or trauma experiences by maintaining or regaining psychological well-being.

On the other hand, trauma resilience encompasses a multifaceted set of qualities and capabilities that enable individuals to navigate and thrive in the aftermath of adversity (Ungar, 2013). It involves the psychological adaptability to maintain mental well-being in the face of traumatic events, often manifesting as coping mastery and the adept use of strategies to manage emotional, cognitive, and behavioral challenges (Lucero, 2021). Stress resilience is a central component, reflecting an individual's capacity to maintain equilibrium amidst stressors and recover from their impact. Trauma resilience is also associated with post-traumatic growth, indicating positive psychological development, increased personal strength, and a sense of purpose following trauma (Brooks, et al., 2020). This resilience manifests through resourceful adaptation, drawing on internal and external resources to effectively cope with adversity. Emotional regulation plays a crucial role, preventing prolonged distress and fostering stability (Brown, et al., 2013). Interpersonal toughness is evident as individuals maintain meaningful connections despite trauma, reflecting social resilience. Trauma resilience may be seen as an innate strength, while cognitive flexibility facilitates adaptive thinking in response to trauma (Yao & Hsieh, 2019). Ultimately, it is demonstrated through sustained functionality in daily life, encompassing work, relationships, and personal pursuits despite the challenges posed by traumatic experiences.

Psychological adjustment, a cornerstone concept in the field of psychology, refers to the adaptive processes through which individuals, in response to internal and external demands, achieve a harmonious balance between their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functions (Hako, et al., 2023). It involves the dynamic interplay between an individual's internal psychological processes and the challenges presented by their environment, with the ultimate goal of achieving a state of well-being and optimal functioning. Psychological adjustment also refers to the degree to which an individual's behavior, thoughts, and emotions are congruent with the demands and opportunities of the environment".

It also refers to an individual's dynamic adaptation to their surrounding environment. For incarcerated individuals, navigating the unique and often challenging world of correctional centers presents profound and complex obstacles to achieving this adaptation (Jewkes & Laws, 2021). Moreover, Psychological adjustment is defined as the ability to cope with the demands of the environment and to derive satisfaction from life experiences (Shapiro, 2015). Myers and Higham (2018) further defined it as the process by which people maintain psychological health and integrity in the face of environmental demands and personal challenges. This definition highlights the dynamic and ongoing nature of psychological adjustment and emphasizes that it involves maintaining psychological health and integrity in the face of environmental demands and personal challenges. Pennebaker (2011) defines psychological adjustment as the process by which individuals adapt to their environment and maintain psychological health, emphasizing the importance of environmental factors in shaping psychological adjustment and highlights that adjustment involves maintaining psychological health. Knaus and Donovan (2016) define psychological adjustment as the process by which individuals adapt to their environment and maintain psychological health. This definition is similar to Pennebaker's definition and emphasizes the importance of environmental factors such as Correctional Centres in shaping psychological adjustment and maintaining psychological health.

Theoretical Framework:

Three-Factor Model of Resilience (TFMR) was used to guide the study. This theory was propounded by Masten and Tellegen's (2012). According to the theory, Masten and Tellegen opined that in the face of life's inevitable challenges, some individuals exhibit remarkable resilience, bouncing back from adversity and even thriving in its aftermath. Understanding the mechanisms underpinning this resilience is crucial for promoting positive development and well-being across diverse populations. Three-Factor Model of Resilience (TFMR), a prominent framework that identifies key

factors contributing to individual differences in resilience. This theory is built on several assumptions summarized into contextual specificity, multidimensionality as well as its dynamic nature. According to Boyce et al., (2021), the nature of adversity and resilience varies depending on individual characteristics, environmental context, and developmental stage. A challenge for one may be an opportunity for another, while resilience in a war-torn country may differ from resilience in a supportive community. Resilience is not a singular entity but rather emerges from a dynamic interplay of three key factors: challenge appraisals, personal resources, and management resources. This holistic perspective avoids attributing resilience solely to individual traits or external circumstances (Sisto, et al., 2019).

In the same vain, the three-factor model of resilience assumes that individuals' capacity for resilience is not static; it changes over time and can be developed or strengthened through interventions. Recognizing this dynamism underscores the potential for promoting resilience throughout the lifespan. This factor focuses on how individuals perceive and interpret adversity. Positive appraisals, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth or mastery, promote resilience, while negative appraisals, like seeing challenges as insurmountable or threatening, hinder it. The model emphasizes that these appraisals are subjective and can be influenced by past experiences, cultural norms, and individual beliefs (Singh, 2022). This factor encompasses individual characteristics that buffer against stressors. Examples include cognitive abilities (problem-solving skills, intelligence), emotional regulation skills (managing stress, coping with anxiety), and personality traits (optimism, self-efficacy). These resources allow individuals to navigate challenges more effectively and maintain emotional well-being.

Research Methodology

This study adopted cross-sectional survey design which is a non-experimental design. Cross-sectional study according to Lauren, (2020) is a type of research design in which you collect data from many different individuals at a single point in time. A sample of prisoners in the research area was employed in this cross-sectional survey, which has been defined as a snapshot of the populations about whom data are gathered. When doing cross-sectional research, the investigators watch variables without changing them. A cross-sectional survey gathers information on an interest population (offenders) at one particular moment in time without the need for intervention. The researcher employed this approach as the investigation was conducted using a questionnaire

The total population of inmates in Taraba State Correctional Centres is 1052 inmates comprising of 508 in Jalingo MSCC, 94 in Wukari MSCC, 93 in Gembu MSCC, 62 in Serti MSCC, 34 in Takum SCF, 28 in K/Lamido SCF, 30 in Zing SCF, 22 in Gassol SCF, 40 in M/Biyu SCF, 71 in Baissa SCF, 47 in Bali SCF, 23 in Lau SCF and no inmate in Lissam SCF totaling 1052 inmates.

The sample size for this study was determined using the formula by Yamane (1967) as seen below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n = Required sample size

N= Total population of inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba

State.

e = Level of error at 5% 93

1 = Constant

$$n = \frac{1052}{1 + 1052(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1052}{1 + 1052(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{1052}{1 + 2.63}$$

$$n = 1052 \div 3.63$$

$$n = 289.807$$

$$n = 290$$

The participants for this study were 290 inmates of correctional centres in Taraba State. Their age ranged from 27–66 years with an average age of 47.77years (SD=13.71). Among them, 242 (83.4%) were males, while 48 (16.6%) were females. Among them 66 (22.8%) of the respondents had no formal education, 125 (43.1%) had primary/secondary education, while 99 (34.1%) had tertiary education. As for their marital status, 78 (26.9%) of the respondents were single, 117 (40.3%) were married, 48 (16.6%) were divorced, 28 (9.7%) were separated and 19 (6.5%) were widowed. On their religious affiliations, 194 (66.9%) were Christians, 88 (30.3%) were Muslim, while 8 (2.8%) were practicing other religious. On their duration of stay, 97 (33.4%) stayed below 1 year, 145 (50%) stayed between 1 – 5 years, while 48 (16.6%) stayed for over 5 years. On the category of inmates, 96 (33.1%) of the respondents were awaiting trial, while 194 (66.9%) were convicted.

Resilience was measure using Smith et al resilience scale developed by Smith et al (2008). The scale has 6-items scale with response format ranging from strongly agree, agree, not sure or undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Sample items include 'I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times', 'I have a hard time making it through stressful events', 'It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event' among others. The BRS was reliable and measured as a unitary construct. It was predictably related to personal characteristics, social relations, coping, and health in all samples. For the reliability of the instrument, the result shows Cronbach's alpha ranging from .80–.91. The present study reported an alpha coefficient of .87.

Distress Disclosure was measure using Kahn and Hessling distress disclosure scale developed by Kahn and Hessling (2001). The scale has 12-item measure of one's tendency to disclose (versus conceal) personally distressing information across time and situations. Sample items include "When I feel upset, I usually confide in my friends", "I prefer not to talk about my problems", "When something unpleasant happens to me, I often look for someone to talk to" among others. The response format is a 5-point Likert response format of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Criterion-related validity and construct validity were reported at .75. The present study reported an alpha coeeficient of .80. This study was conducted among inmate in Correctional Centres in Taraba State

The researcher received an introductory letter from the department of Psychology, Benue State University, Makurdi and presented to the Controller of Corrections Nasarawa State Command for data on pilot study. During the main study, the researcher presented the letter of introduction to the Controller General of Corrections in Taraba State Facilities for main study. The researcher then recruited and trained two research assistants (correctional officers) to assist in data collection in the correctional centres. An approval was obtained in this regard to ensure that proper permission was documented before the researcher proceeded to the study areas which are the selected strata comprising of Southen Tarabe (Wukari and Takum), Central Taraba (Baissa and Bali) and Northern Taraba (Jalingo and Zing). Upon arrival in the correctional centres, appropriate permission was sought from the authorities by presenting the acceptance letter to enable the researcher collect data from the correctional centres which are Wukari, Takum Baissa, Bali, Jalingo and Zing. Ethical consideration was also put in place to ensure that the ethical rights of the respondents are not tempered with. Proportional sampling was used to select the participants based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Questionnaires were administered to each of the selected respondents and those who could read and write were allowed to answer the questions themselves. However, those who could not read and write were assisted by the researcher and his

assistants in the respective Correctional Centres. Their responses which were based on their willingness to attend to the questionnaire constituted data for the study. After the entire administration process, the returned copies of the questionnaire were returned and considered for statistical analysis.

The researcher employed the use of descriptive and inferential statistics for data analyses. The researcher used descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviations, frequencies and simple percentages for the bio-data analysis. Simple linear regression was used to test hypothesis one, two and three, Hayes Process Macro for testing hypotheses four and five while hypothesis six was tested using Standard multiple regression

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Summary of Simple Linear Regression showing the influence of trauma resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates of Correctional Centres in Taraba State.

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	B	T	Sig.
Constant	.429	.229	433.501	1,288		18.153	.000
trauma resilience					.479	19.344	.000

The result presented in table 4.1 indicated that there was a significant positive influence of trauma resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates of correctional centres in Taraba State [$R=.479$, $R^2=.229$, $F(1,288)=433.501$, $p<.001$]. The result further indicated that trauma resilience explained 22.9% of the variation in psychological adjustment. This implies that, inmates with high resilience ability will be more likely to adjust psychologically to incarceration-related stressors. Thus, hypothesis one was supported.

Table 2: Summary of Simple Linear Regression showing the influence of distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates of Correctional Centres in Taraba State

Variables	R	R ²	F	df	B	T	Sig.
Constant	.289	.083	26.217	1,288		10.192	.000
trauma resilience					.289	5.120	.000

The result presented in table 2 indicated that there was a significant positive influence of distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates of correctional centres in Taraba State [$R=.289$, $R^2=.083$, $F(1,288)=26.217$,

<.001]. The result further indicated that distress 101 disclosure explained 8.3% of the variation in psychological adjustment. This implies that, inmates who disclose their distress levels will be more likely to adjust psychologically to incarceration related stressors. Thus, hypothesis two was also supported

The first hypothesis which stated that trauma resilience will significantly influence psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State was tested using simple linear regression and the result showed that there was a significant influence of trauma resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. Various studies have highlighted the complexities of psychological adjustment in correctional settings, suggesting that resilience uniformly leads to positive outcomes. For instance, Wetzler and Gilson (2021) found that higher levels of perceived social support and resiliency significantly improved psychological adjustment among inmates. Moreover, the impact of trauma on adjustment is further explored in the context of specific interventions. Decker et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of trauma-informed care in improving emotional regulation and psychological well-being among incarcerated women. Furthermore, findings from Nishimi et al. (2023) suggested that while resilience can protect against negative health outcomes after trauma, its relationship with adjustment may be influenced by various stressors and situational contexts. In a correctional environment, where stressors are prevalent, the ability to adapt psychologically might depend more on coping mechanisms and available support as well.

Table 3: Summary of Process Mediation Analysis showing the mediating role of distress disclosure on relationship between trauma resilience and psychological adjustment among inmates of correctional centres in Taraba State.

Variable	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	Sig.
LLCI	ULCI						
Constant	.353	.124	20.370	2,287		9.7709	.000
24.5348	36.9129						
Trauma Resilience					.3324	3.6599	.000
.1536	.5111						
Distress Disclosure					-.5650	6.2206	.000
.7438	-.3862						-
Int_1 (X * M)					-.1391		.000
.1666	-.1095						-

The result shown in table 3 shows that distress disclosure significantly mediated the relationship between trauma resilience and psychological adjustment; [R=.353, R²=.124, F(2,287)=20.370, Int_1(X*M) (β=.1391,

$p < .001$]. This means that distress disclosure has a multiplier effect such that it can boost the influence of trauma resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates. The result further showed that trauma resilience ($\beta = .3324$, $t = 3.6599$, $p < .05$) and distress disclosure ($\beta = -.5650$, $t = 6.2206$, $p < .001$) significantly predicted psychological adjustment independently. Therefore, hypothesis four was also supported.

The second hypothesis which stated that distress disclosure will significantly influence resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State, was tested using simple linear regression and the result showed that there was a significant influence of distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State indicating that as inmates increase their level of disclosing their distress, their level of psychological adjustment also increases and vice versa. The relationship between distress disclosure and psychological adjustment among inmates has gained significant attention in recent literature, particularly in the context of correctional facilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results obtained from this study, there is a significant influence of trauma resilience on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. There is a significant influence of distress disclosure on psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. Distress disclosure also significantly mediated the relationship between trauma resilience and psychological adjustment among inmates in Correctional Centres in Taraba State. Based on the findings discussed earlier regarding trauma resilience, the following recommendations were provided.

There should be introduction of trauma-informed care initiatives by government focusing on understanding the impact of trauma on inmates. Training staff to be aware of trauma responses can foster a supportive environment that promotes healing and resilience. Government should create safe spaces for inmates to share their emotional struggles and experiences. Group therapy sessions and peer support programs can encourage distress disclosure, helping inmates feel less isolated and more connected. There should be offering of Offer workshops focused on enhancing resilience skills. These could include coping strategies, mindfulness practices, and problem-solving techniques that empower inmates to adapt positively to challenges.

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