Community Perception of Ex-Offenders and Implications on Recidivism in Southwest Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Community perception of ex-offenders has a long way in determining acceptance, re-entry, re-integration and future crime status. Despite various strategies and intervention programs by government globally, ex-offenders are still finding community re-entry and re-integration difficult. And this has contributed significantly to the level of criminality in the community. Therefore, this study is designed to assess relationship between community perception of ex-offenders and the control of recidivism. The study is quantitatively designed where data were collected from 171 correctional officials and 250 recidivists using questionnaires. The correlation analysis of the study indicated a Standard Deviation of 0.065 and a P-Value of 0.001, thus establishing a positive relationship between community perception of ex-offenders and the control of recidivism.

Keywords: Community Perception, Family Perception, Community Rejection, Re-entry, Recidivism

INTRODUCTION

One factor that impacts the level of recidivism in the community today is the degree of acceptance and support enjoy by ex-offenders (Taylor & Becker, 2015). The wish of every prisoner (serving either short- or long-term jail period) is to have a smooth and seamless the process of reintegrating into society after the completion of the jail term. Many ex-offenders struggle with serious social adaptation issues, such as stigmatization and discrimination in their families and communities, which has negatively affected their capability of getting job or accommodation, education, or develop (or regain) social and personal development. Unless the community helps them deal with such problems to ensure successful re-entry and re-integration, former offenders face the danger of getting caught in a destructive cycle of unsuccessful reintegration into society, reoffending, being convicted again, and facing social rejection. (Simasiku, 2018).

It has been observed that ex-offenders usually find it difficult to seamless and successful re-integrate into the community due to some prevailing factors which include stigmatization and rejection by the community they belonged (Pogorzelski et al., 2005). Stigmatization and rejection of ex-offenders by the community have made them to be homeless and wanderers after completing their jail period (Inzlicht et al., 2012). The failure of the community to seamless integrate the ex-offenders has made recidivism and return to the prison among them inevitable (Otu, 2015).

In Southwest Nigeria for instance, the cultural practice categorizes prisoner and ex-offender as an outcast and therefore, associating with them is seen as a taboo (Otu, 2015). It is well known that members of stigmatized groups frequently experience social exclusion as a result of their devaluation and discrediting (Crocker & Major, 1989). The singular believe has made re-entry of ex-offenders into the community difficult. In the face of the rejection, stigmatization and abandonment by the society, an ex-offender decides to commit crime in order to go back to the prison (where he/she is accepted co-prisoners) because such an ex-offender will see going back to prison as a consolation for his rejection by the society (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Study Questions

i. What is the relationship between community acceptance of ex-offenders and recidivism in Southwest Nigeria?
ii. Does family acceptance of ex-offenders affect recidivism in Southwest Nigeria?

Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are:
i. to assess relationship between community acceptance of ex-offenders and recidivism in Southwest Nigeria.
ii. to determine relationship between family acceptance of ex-offenders and recidivism in Southwest Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Perception of Ex-Offenders and Recidivism

Recidivism is defined as the act of being re-arrested, re-offending, persistently engaging in criminal activities, resisting rehabilitation, and repeatedly exhibiting deviant behaviour within the context of criminal behaviour studies globally (Otu, 2015).

Each year, relatively large number of ex-offenders complete their jail period and are being released from prison for re-entry into the community but a large percentage of them re-offend (Gómez, 2018). The discriminatory attitude of the community towards ex-offenders make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for re-entry (Otu, 2015). Rejection, stigmatization and abandonment have a significant influence on the behaviour of a prisoner after finish servicing jail term (Bello, 2017). Being labeled as rejected and stigmatized has an impact on behaviour and self-perception (Crocker & Major, 1989). Studies have shown that re-entry of offenders who have obtained a stable and steady employment and maintain a good social relationship with family and the community members are less likely to re-offend (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Community perceptions are essential to the successful reintegration of ex-offenders. In 2002, more than 600,000 prisoners were released from U.S. prisons, a number four times higher than in 1975. However, within just three (3) years, nearly 70% of these individuals were re-arrested, with half returning to prison either for committing a new crime or violating their release conditions. This clearly highlights that transitioning from prison to the community is a challenging process, and avoiding crime may not even be the most significant obstacle they face (Visher & Travis, 2003).

Community support is essential for successful re-entry and reintegration; increasing social discrimination and stigma will likely heighten recidivism rates among offenders. The high recidivism rate in the U.S. is attributed to factors such as the prevalence of violent crime, the stigmatization of certain groups linked to criminal behaviour, the imposition of severe penalties for non-violent offenses (particularly drug-related crimes), and a criminal justice system that prioritizes punishment over rehabilitation (Mauer & Coyle, 2004).

Community acceptance appears to be linked to positive re-entry outcomes, not just due to emotional or relational bonds, but also because families play a vital role in meeting the basic needs of individuals reintegrating into society (Mowen et al., 2018). Community support is recognized as a key protective factor against future recidivism (Boman & Mowen, 2017). Implementing policies to maintain community connections with incarcerated individuals is vital for controlling recidivism rates among offenders (Clarke, 2013). Upon re-entering society, released inmates often face numerous challenges such as securing employment and obtaining suitable housing can significantly increase the risk of recidivism (Petersilia, 2003). To overcome these challenges, individuals frequently rely on support from family, friends, and community resource organizations. Social support plays a crucial role in adult social bonds by offering resources that help individuals transform their lives. It can facilitate and maintain cognitive shifts that promote desistance from crime. Interventions emphasizing social support are more successful in encouraging desistance, whereas punitive approaches often contribute to further criminal behaviour. Social support helps ex-offenders navigate the numerous stressors they encounter upon release, aiding in their sustained desistance (Chouhy et al., 2020).

Also, family engagement, educational attainment, and stable employment are widely recognized as important protective factors against problematic behaviour. These factors are critical for incarcerated youth and should be integral to re-entry planning to improve post-release outcomes (Donna & Jamie, 2017). Allyson et al. 2017 in a study on family acceptance and recidivism, analyzed 318 sample of Canadians convicted of sexual offenses on completion of their jail term. The result of the study revealed a low prevalence of recidivism that continued to decline following social acceptance and support received from the members of family and community. The study further revealed that stable family support has a strong positive relationship at reducing recidivism among offenders. Family support is one of the ways an ex-offenders can overcome the obstacle of seamless re-entry and re-integration. A substantial number of inmates rely heavily on their immediate family members for both emotional support (such as guidance and expressions of affection) and practical assistance (like help with daily activities) after completing their prison sentence. Family support can take various forms, including housing, transportation, emotional encouragement, practical help, job opportunities, and childcare.

Family support plays a significant role in providing cash assistance to a large percentage of formerly incarcerated individuals, particularly since many of them have limited resources (Montes et al., 2021). Bello (2017) emphasizes prison-based education, restorative justice initiatives, social integration efforts, and programs focused on probation, parole, and re-entry are crucial for effectively reducing recidivism. Additionally, addressing factors such as substance abuse, unsupportive family dynamics, and mental and physical health issues can help decrease the likelihood of recidivism (Bello, 2017). Antwi (2015) highlights several key factors that must be addressed to reduce recidivism, including prior criminal history, low educational achievement, antisocial personality traits, homelessness, and associations with criminal networks.

Furthermore, Mooney & Bala (2018) in a book, titled "The Importance of Supporting Family Connections to Ensure Success Re-entry" stressed that the positive effects of family visitations in reducing the prevalence of recidivism among the released prisoners cannot be under-estimated. Scholars argue that family support plays a crucial role in encouraging released prisoners during their transformation process, mitigating the adverse consequences of being incarcerated on children and their families, while also reinforcing family connections as a whole. The scholars further asserted that successful re-entry for these individuals can lead to reduced recidivism and a safer community. As a result, society stands to benefit by recognizing the importance of these connections and developing policies that enhance them, ultimately supporting incarcerated individuals, their families, and the broader community.

In a study by Odedokun (2022), to examine among relationship between dysfunctional families, substance abuse, emotional intelligence, and recidivism among young adult inmates at Agodi Correctional Centre in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, collected data from 187 inmates using adapted questionnaires and analyzed through regression analysis with multiple factors. Findings from the study indicated significant correlation among dysfunctional family, substance use and the prevalence of recidivism. The study emphasized that family is key to reducing prevalence of recidivism among offenders. Additionally, Fahmy & Wallace (2019) investigated the impact of family support on physical health during re-entry using the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) dataset and a repeated measures Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model. The result of the research revealed that social support has important relationship with successful re-integration of the released prisoners.

In another study by Muthru (2021), to explore how family-related risk and resilience factors influence recidivism among offenders in Kenyan prisons gathered data from both inmates and prison staff through questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interviews. The analysis, employing regression and correlation methods, identified a significant relationship between recidivism and factors such as family support, family conflict, and family criminality. Moreso, Tegeng & Abadi (2019) in another study to explore factors contributing to recidivism in Dessie and Woldiya, Ethiopia, employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data from correctional center inmates. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic methods. The study reveals that significant factors contributing to recidivism included poverty, unemployment, a lack of familial love and support, and psychological issues such as depression and anxiety.

Similarly, Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong (2018) explored the connection among social ties, prison visitation, and recidivism. The study focused on inmates' family connections prior to incarceration and family visits during their time in prison, utilized a sample of 205 adult inmates to examine the mediating effects of pre-imprisonment relationships on recidivism. The results highlighted the importance of the quality of familial relationships before conviction in reducing recidivism rates. This societal rejection pushes ex-offenders towards future criminal behaviour, leading to their re-imprisonment shortly after release (Besin-Mengla, 2020).

In a qualitative study by Muthee et al., 2020 on the challenges faced by female ex-inmates in Kenya, collected data from 41 female ex-convicts, three focus group discussions, and nine key informants. Findings indicated that the influence of the ex-inmates' individual circumstances, family dynamics, and community context plays a critical role in their re-entry and reintegration. If these factors are not adequately addressed, they may contribute to increased recidivism rates among female ex-inmates. Furthermore, Turanovic & Tasca (2020) investigated the

connection between prison visitation and recidivism among 17,542 inmates, analyzing whether this relationship varies based on the type of incarceration setting. The study found that maintaining family relationships through visitation significantly reduces the likelihood of re-arrest for new offenses.

According to studies, recidivism rates are lower among former offenders who sustain regular contact and connections with their families during incarceration compared to those who lack such engagement (Women Prison Association, 1996). However, maintaining regular contact with family can be challenging for ex-offenders after completing their prison sentences (Simasiku, 2018). In a study, Adam (1992) focused primarily on how most prisoners find that losing contact with society, particularly with family members, community members, and people with whom they have developed strong bonds and relationships is a burdensome experience that may have an impact on their ability to successfully re-enter society.

It has been shown that allowing offenders' families to see them while they are incarcerated lowers their likelihood of reoffending following their release (Travis, 2003). According to academics, regular and sustained family visits will lower recidivism (Simasiku, 2018). For many years, family visitation has been a feature and standard procedure of the jail system (Adam & Fisher, 1976). However, despite research showing that inmates' connections to the outside world and society may enhance their adjustment and lower the likelihood of relapsing into criminal activity, the practice of prison visitation has not always been fully embraced by correctional facility officials (prisons) (Bales & Mears, 2008)

Again, family visitation may lessen the possible stigmatization that comes with incarceration (Simasiku, 2018). Being incarcerated can cause an inmate to develop or possess the persona of an offender or criminal, and the act of incarceration itself may cause a prisoner to be labeled as such by the community. Through the development of social relationships, family visitation gives ex-offenders access to resources and support, such as help finding housing, work, and social services (Hairston, 1988). Upon their return, ex-offenders often face the difficulty of rebuilding relationships strained by years of restricted interaction, addressing possible feelings of bitterness, and adapting to changes in family dynamics while relying on their loved ones for support (Bello,2017).

However, there is limited evidence to show that family visitation is an effective mechanism to reduce recidivism. A recent study revealed that the evidence remains limited (Bales & Mears, 2008). Family visitation may sustain or strengthen the social and community bond and can equally protect the ex-offenders from recidivism (Hairston, 1988). Visitation tend to improve the bond and ties of the ex-offenders after their jail term (La Vigne et al., 2005). During and after incarceration, this connection to family and community members offers a channel for the exercise of informal social control, such as social bonding.

Rejection and abandonment have a significant influence on the behaviour of a prisoner after finish servicing jail term. Being labeled as a rejected and stigmatized person has impact on behaviour and self-perception (Crocker & Major, 1989). Scholars have always shown that re-entry of offenders who have obtained stable and steady employment, maintain good social relationship with members of the family and supported by the community are less prone to reoffend (Berg & Huebner, 2011).

Globally, recidivism is a significant problem for governments, communities, and cultures. According to reports, a substantial percentage of America's freed inmates reoffend; of the 404,638 inmates released in 2005, over 67.8% were arrested again within three years, and 76.6% were arrested again within five years (Durose et al., 2014). Recidivism rates in Norway ranged from 14% to 42%, which was somewhat different from this situation (Andersen & Skardhamar, 2017). In Sub-Sahara Africa, recidivism has increased greatly and this is becoming a major challenge to the governments and humanitarian organizations of these nations considering its daily occurrence among the former prisoners (Osayi, 2013). In Mauritius, there has been an increase in the prison population occasioned by the high rate of recidivism and this has made government to embark on building of new prison facilities in August 2010 to accommodate the prison population (Otu 2015). In Nigeria, recidivism has become a major occurrence among the former prisoners (Abrifor et al., 2012).

In 2005, Nigeria had a 37.5% prevalence rate of recidivism, which is significantly higher than the 10% average in other African nations (Soyombo, 2009). In 2010, the prevalence has increased to 52.4% (Abrifor et al., 2012). Studies have shown an increase in the prevalence of recidivism among the Nigerian ex-offenders, especially the male and the young ex-offenders (Osayi, 2013; Soyombo 2009; Ugwuoke, 2010) and consequently, the Nigerian correctional institutions are witnessing upsurge in the prevalence of ex-offenders re-offending, re-lapsing of criminal activities and re-engaging in other anti-social behaviour (Otu, 2015).

In addition, in terms of its financial implication on governance and running of the prisons, recidivism means more criminal activities, more victims of the criminal activities and more financial implication of the criminal activities on the government, this is because it puts the prison system on persistence pressure with its adverse increase in the number of inmates and congestion of the prisons; recidivism has a cost on the government and it is capital intensive in nature because of its toll on government expenditure (Otu, 2015). It is noted that tax payers money are being expended by government daily on the provision of welfare package and other services for the inmates in the prisons and this is having a negative impact on government expenditure and also serves as a burden

on the country (Chukwumerije, 2012). Funds being allocated and allotted for the trial of released prisoners has definitely reduced the public funds available for the provision of other crucial and essential services like education, security, health care services, infrastructure, and so on (Solomon, 2004). The economic implication of failed re-entry of ex-offenders are major financial concern and issue for the government and other policymakers in the world today, the act of anti-social behaviour and deviance has a social cost together with the cost of investigating, the cost of prosecution, the cost of legal proceedings and that of the imprisonment (Chin & Dandurand, 2012).

Furthermore, on the increase in criminal activities within the society, recidivism has been seen as one of the contributory factors to the increase in crime rates. Recidivism has the capacity to increase the prevalence of crime and anti-social behaviour in the community, hence, reducing its prevalence can be seen as one of the most effective ways to ensure that the community is safe for the generality of the people (Gómez, 2018). Recidivism is a security risk in the society because it increases the level and rate of insecurity, the moment an ex-offender failed to re-integrate into the community, it will cause an increase in the criminal activities in such society (Chin & Dandurand, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Labeling Theory

This theory presents a uniquely a sociological perspective that highlights the impact of social labeling in understanding and influencing patterns of crime and deviance in society. It assumes that, while deviant behaviour may initially stem from various factors and causes, being classified, identified, or labeled as deviant plays a pivotal role in its continuation and development. (Inzlicht et al., 2012). In many situations, stigmatizing and labeling someone as a criminal increases the likelihood that they would engage in deviant behavior (Bernburg et al., 2006).

Labeling theory posits that, unlike the conventional roles that shape livelihoods, the social system designates criminals with specific roles referred to as deviant roles, stigmatic roles, or roles associated with social stigma. Stigma, therefore, is defined as a negative social label attached to a particular trait, diminishing an individual's acceptance within society (Goffman, 2003). Social stigmatization has been found to be a trigger for feelings of hopelessness and humiliation, which can quickly escalate into rage and frustration. An ex-offender may also begin to live up to the name, dress oddly, and behave in ways that are expected of him as a stigmatized person (Goffman, 2003). The public's unfavorable classification, labeling, and/or identification of former criminals has a big impact on their behavior, which can eventually lead to recidivism (Inzlicht et al.,2012).

In this regard, a criminal who has been classified as such or an ex-offender has no option but to adhere to the fundamental principles of that ruling. Because of the social rejection, labeling has been a means of forcing the ex-offender to find comfort in the company of other deviants who share their characteristics (Goffman, 2003). Recidivism may be predicted by classifying an offender as a criminal. After receiving a label, a criminal will become stigmatized in the community, which will undoubtedly have an impact on their reintegration and re-entry. Overall, this results in a higher rate of recidivism among formerly incarcerated individuals.

In Nigeria, it is always difficult for an ex-offender to secure job or even get married. This is because ex-offender is always labeled as a black sheep in the community who is not worthy to be associated with. Because of this, no one wants to be linked to a former criminal, which will lead to recidivism. The majority of offenders experience severe problems with social adaption, such as stigmatization and exclusion from family and community, this can negatively impact their ability to secure employment or housing, return to formal education, or build and maintain social and personal networks. Without support to address these challenges, they risk falling into a cycle of failed social reintegration, reoffending, reconviction, and further social exclusion.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine community's perception of ex-offenders on recidivism in Southwest Nigeria. Questionnaires were employed as the research instrument. The study was conducted in Nigeria's southwest geopolitical region, which consists of 20 correctional facilities. The targeted population in the study is the recidivists at the correctional centres. The study being quantitatively designed employed questionnaires as instrument for collection of primary data. The questionnaire for recidivists included 5-point Likert scale questions, while the questionnaire for correctional officials featured open-ended questions to facilitate qualitative responses. The questions were designed to align with the study's objectives, as outlined below:

Section A: The respondents' sociodemographic details were taken from the General Statistical Information on Recidivism—Revised (GSIR-R) (Nafekh & Motiuk, 2002).

Section B: General Statistical Information on Recidivism-Revised (GSIR-R) was used to modify the recidivism level (Nafekh & Motiuk, 2002).

Section C: Social/Family acceptance adapted from Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) (Sarason, I.G et al. 1983).

Furthermore, the study employed stratified research technique. The first and second stages involved selection of region in the country and correctional facilities which were based on the crime and recidivism records. Because the study centred on prisoners who had been tried and convicted more than once, the eligible recidivists were purposefully chosen for the third stage. In the last phase, the officials were specifically chosen to give further details regarding recidivism rate in their correctional facilities.

On the respondents, correctional officials in charge of welfare of the inmates assisted in identifying recidivists (through registry records) who could read and write in English language and as well understood the objectives of the research. Consequently, recidivists were selected through random sampling (raffle draw). Also, correctional officials were selected randomly based on seniority and those directedly connected with the welfare of the inmates. The researcher selected senior staff and those directly connected with the welfare of the inmates because they will provide adequate information that would be required for the research objectives.

The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines that governed this kind of study. Plagiarism and fraud were not committed by the researcher. The researcher did not abuse rights and trust that were entrusted in him in order to conduct the study by guaranteeing the anonymity and security of the information provided by participants.

Additionally, each state headquarters of the correctional facilities provided letter of authorization for accessing the correction yards. The purpose of the approval letter was to allow the researcher to visit the prisoners without restriction while conducting the study. The welfare officials at the correctional facility's yards were then shown the letter of approval, and they arranged for the prisoners to participate in the study. The participants' informed consent was acquired prior to the research instrument being distributed. Participants were made aware that they might withdraw from the study at any moment.

RESULTS

Data Screening and Cleaning

Prior to data analysis, data screening and cleansing are crucial (DeSimone & Harms, 2018). In order to determine whether the hypotheses may be accepted or rejected, this step is taken to make sure the data can be analyzed (Pallant, 2020). Data screening and cleaning, according to DeSimone & Harms (2018), include assessing the accuracy of data entry and resolving problems with missing information.

Missing Data

The SPSS produced a missing value analysis (MVA) report. Since no missing data was discovered, this stage demonstrated that all 250 surveys had been completed in their whole. A normalcy test was subsequently performed following the completion of the MVA.

Method of Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential analysis were used in the study. Descriptive analysis was used in the study population while inferential analysis was used in testing the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.
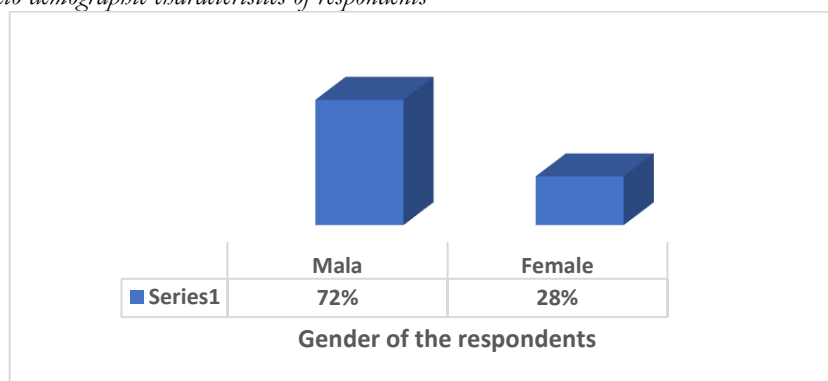
Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

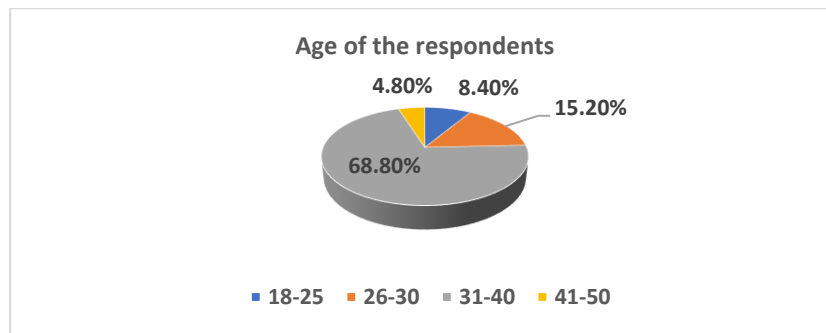|	Mala	Female
■ Series1	72%	28%
Gender of the respondents		

Fig I: Gender of the respondents

Fig II: Age distribution of the respondents

Relationship between Community Acceptance, Family Acceptance and Recidivism among Ex-Offenders

The inferential statistical analysis that predicts societal acceptance, familial acceptance, and recidivism among ex-offenders was carried out using Smart PLS Version 3.3.
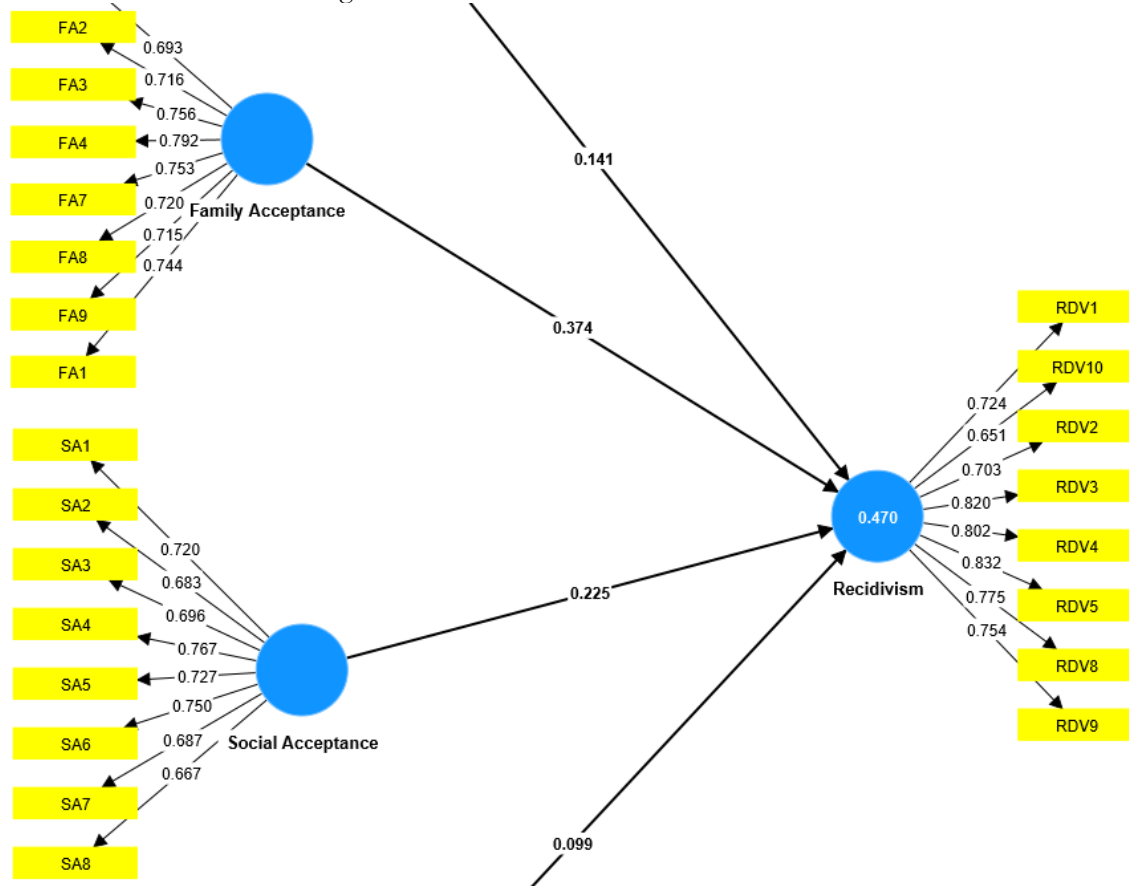

Table 1: Hypotheses testing results.

	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Family Acceptance of the ex-offenders → Recidivism	0.374	0.059	6.331	0.000	Supported
Social Acceptance of the ex-offenders → Recidivism	0.225	0.065	3.45	0.001	Supported

The correlation analysis results indicate a significant relationship between both social and family acceptance and the management of recidivism among ex-offenders

DISCUSSION

The outcome of the study has shown that both community and family acceptance and support are essential ingredients in reducing recidivism among ex-offenders. According to the findings, the more the community and family support, the less likelihood of recidivism. The perception of both community and family members has a long way to determine whether an ex-offender will go back to crime or not. In this sense, both community and family support have a significant effect on future crime status of an ex-offender. Community and family support may come in different ways, such as housing, education, financial support and so on. Strong community and family acceptability are clearly associated with reduced rates of recidivism (Barretti & Beitin, 2010; Datchi & Sexton, 2013; Underwood et al., 2006; Vera Institute of Justice, 2011). Family relationships significantly influence criminal behaviour (Barrick et al., 2014).

In support of this study, Akporaro (2019) used data from key informant interviews and questionnaires with a sample of 300 inmates at Ilesa, Ondo, and Ado Ekiti prisons, evaluated the impact of societal level factors on recidivism among inmates in a selection of prisons in South-Western Nigeria. Findings showed that the prevalence of recidivism among prisoners in Nigerian jails was significantly influenced by society level factors. The study also demonstrated a high relationship between recidivism among prisoners in South-Western Nigerian prisons and social characteristics such as acceptance, rejection, unemployment, and training.

Likewise, Varghese & Raghavan (2020) in another study on issues, challenges and further ways on the restoration of released prisoners to society in India affirmed that life of inmates in Indian prisons is very difficult despite all rehabilitative programs, the released inmates are still finding re-entry and re-integration very difficult due to psycho-social and economic issues. The researchers confirmed that recidivism among criminal offenders has increased because societal stigmatization and labeling brought on by crime make it more difficult for released inmates to re-enter society and reintegrate. Similarly, Simasiku (2018) gathered data on Social factors influencing recidivism among 100 released prisoners at Mukobeko Maximum Correctional Facility in Kabwe district, Zambia, using the Male Recidivist Personal Data Questionnaire (MRPDQ) and interview methods. The study's results indicated that recidivism among Zambian ex-offenders is influenced by various societal factors, such as stigmatization, social acceptance, drug use, and unemployment.

Oruta & Luyt (2022) equally employed a quantitative research approach (questionnaire) to gather information from 384 recidivists, 25 prison officials, 13 probation officers, 27 recidivists' families, and 18 community members about the recidivists' recidivism factors among reintegrated inmates in Kenya. According to the study, recidivism and offender traits are significantly correlated. The study also showed that the tendency to commit crimes again will be influenced by the attitudes and perceptions of the community. Research has indicated that prison visitation can assist offenders in preserving or reestablishing social relationships, which can enhance their re-entry and re-integration process (Cochran, 2019).

Additionally, Berg & Huebner (2010) and Naser & LaVigne (2006) confirmed that the majority of released inmates rely heavily on their family, friends, and neighbors for social support in the form of housing, clothing, food, child care, transportation, financial aid, and job assistance for a smooth transition back into society as soon as their jail term is over. A prisoner's emotional and instrumental forms of social support, which are vital for re-entry and re-integration, may deteriorate in the first ten months after their release from prison, according to research by Fontaine et al. (2012), Green et al. (2006), and Shollenberger (2009). The study also revealed that the significant stress experienced by both returning inmates and their loved ones upon reintegration into society, the heavy reliance of ex-offenders on their families, and the differing expectations placed on both parties during the transition period have all been associated with the decline of social support after release.

Furthermore, above findings corroborated extract from correctional officials as detailed below:

"There are a lot of recidivism in this correctional centre and majority of the offenders are males. Again, majority of the offence they commit include stealing, rubbery case, fighting and attempted kidnapping among others". (43-year-old/correctional official/Akure)

"I can identify some of the recidivists who have been released from this correctional centre more than once and was brought back to prison again for another offence. The community unwillingness to acceptance them has contributed to their continuous re-arrest" (50-year-old/correctional official/Ikoyi)

"the offenders are usually not well received by the community after their jail term because they have been labeled, stigmatized and abandoned. Consequently, some of the inmates often feel rejected and shy in the community, knowing fully well that the community know where they are coming from" (54-year-old/correctional official/Abeokuta)

" the community has not been helping the released inmates to re-integrate. The community usually discriminate against them. The society has labeled them as criminals and therefore does not want to associate with them. This is really affecting the inmates. It is not encouraging them; it is affected their psychology. That is why some of them will re-offend and get arrested again. If the released inmates are properly accommodated and giving job, they won't offend again" (50-year-old/correctional official/Akure)

"The attitude of people in the community has not encouraged the released inmates to re-integrate seamlessly. People to want to have anything to do with them. The don't give them job, they don't give them accommodation and they don't marry, basically because they are ex-convicts. The inmates are reformed now, if people can accept them, they won't commit crime again. But if people don't accept them, they still go back to crime and come back to jail again." (46-year-old/correctional official/Owo)

"the frequency of the return to prison by the inmates has been on the increase now. The reason is that members of the community have been reluctant to accommodate the released inmates. People are afraid to relate with them, people are afraid to transact business with them. They don't give them job, and these people will want to survive at any cost, and this informed their going back to commit crime again. If the society can accommodate them and show them love, I believe the ex-convicts will not commit crime again" (54-year-old/correctional official/Ilaro)

"re-entry is difficult for the released inmates because society is not ready to take them back again. Government should embark on sensitization program to let people know that the released inmates are reformed and that they should show them love. There should be a law in this country to make it illegal for both members of the community and employers of labour to discriminate against the ex-convicts. This will enable people not to discriminate against the ex-convicts again." (40-year-oldcorrectional official/Kirikiri)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study focused on assessing relationship between community perception for ex-offenders and recidivism in Southwest Nigeria. Two hundred and fifty recidivists and one hundred and seventy-one correctional officials at selected correctional centres in Southwest Nigeria were used for the research. The study's findings reveal a significant connection between the community's and family's perception of ex-offenders and the management of recidivism.

Consequently, the study recommended that correctional authority should organize public advocacy programs on continuous basis to sensitize members of the public on the need to see the ex-offenders as part of them and understand that the ex-offenders have undergone reformation and rehabilitation while at correctional centres. Secondly, correctional authority should organize programs to inform communities on the danger inherent in stigmatization and abandonment of the ex-offenders. In addition, correctional authority should organize regular sensitization programs for the inmates on the need to see the community as where they belong after completing their sentencing period at the correctional centres. Likewise, Communities should establishment vocational training and skill acquisition centres for the ex-offenders to discourage them from recidivism. Finally, Government should make laws to make discrimination against ex-offenders' illegal for both members of the community and the employers of labour. This will give the ex-offenders confidence in their re-entry bid.

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