



Assessment of Unequal Treatment of Inmates based on Gender in Borno State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Modern imprisonment is intended to work on a criminal's mind and body to remove them from a position where they may continue their criminal behavior, place them into an institution that satisfies the masses who desire some form of retribution, and persuade other would-be criminals that such activities are not acceptable. In most societies, men and women are different from each other. We see this in their activities and businesses, as well as their access to and control over resources and participation in decision-making. The concept of gender is not limited to the male or female species but extends beyond that to fully assess their correlations. Researchers and laypeople have continuously argued about this relationship, and political parties, in enforcing a change in the political environment, economy, social environment, and cultural environment at the local, national, and supranational levels, to mention but a few. This study intends to explore the unequal treatment of inmates based on gender in Borno State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Gender, Inmates, Crime, Prison

Introduction

Gender and sexual violence (GSV) are now the world's most persistent social problem, yet it is the least visible abuse of human rights violations (UNICEF, 2020). GSV are social problems; they are behaviors that endanger individuals and humanity. So, the first thing that comes to mind is, "What is a societal problem?" By definition, a social problem is any circumstance or activity that has negative effects on a considerable number of people and requires an immediate fix (Aizon, 2015). Even so, there are both objective and subjective meanings in this definition. However, according to the social constructivist interpretation, a variety of negative events and behaviors take place. Many of these are sufficiently unfavourable to qualify as social problems; others are not, and as a result, they do not. Other unfavourable circumstances are only recognized as social problems when the public draws attention to the event or action (Rubington and Weinberg, 2010).

However, the antiquity of a global agreement on rape or sexual assault is changing from what was available in the 1960s and 1970s. Gender-based violence against women and girls may have existed since the dawn of human civilization and was undoubtedly widespread in places such as the United States prior to the 1970s. Even though males were often accused of sexual assault and rape and jailed for it, the issue went unreported by law enforcement and received no attention from the media, and many people believed that assault and rape were simply random occurrences (Allison and Wrightsman, 1993). "Prior to the modern women's crusade, which started in the late 1970s with a fervor to fight rape and sexual assault as terrible misconduct and manifestations of gender inequality, sexual violence was not recognized as a social problem, even though it did occur." So, interpretations of these crimes started to revolutionize, and authorities started to give them more consideration (Aizon, 2015); hence, GSV against women turned out to be a social problem.

According to the constructivist perspective, "a social problem is an undesirable circumstance or behavior, but it is not a social problem unless it is acknowledged as such by decision-makers, substantial numbers of laypeople, or significant portions of the larger community." Yet not all sociologists believe in this assertion. According to a different viewpoint, sociologists think that harmful events and behaviors should be classified as societal problems; as a result, gender and sexual violence have been issues since before the 1960s and 1970s. GSV, a harmful condition and behavior, harms women and girls physically, psychologically, sexually, and/or economically as a result of socially imposed power disparities between men and women. Intimidation, denial of liberty, and the threat of violence, whether in the private or public sphere, are also included. Women and children are the most disadvantaged members of any human society because they have less control over their bodies than men and less power to make their own decisions or manage their own resources. The social conventions that normalize men abusing women as a means of discipline or on a regular basis contribute to gender disparity and ongoing violence against women. "Women and girls, especially those in their adolescence, have an elevated risk of GSV around the world, particularly as a result of violence and displacement."

Methodology

The Study Area

Maiduguri is the capital city of Borno State, situated between 11°N and 13°N. Its establishment started when the British, under the leadership of Sir Luggard, shifted the capital of Borno from Kukawa because of the inaccessibility and unhealthy nature of the place. Yerwa stood on a low ridge about 100 feet above sea level and was a good center for trade across the desert and into the French territories. Originally, Maiduguri was bounded on all sides by the Kukawa Local Government Area. It has a high population and a long history as an urban site. The principal ethnic group is Kanuri, but they now account for only about half of the total population of the city. As in every state of the country, English is the official language, though Hausa, Shuwa, and Kanuri are widely spoken.

Maiduguri is also referred to as the town or city in which the state governor and other government functionaries reside; thus, all policies pertaining to the administration of the state are made in the city (Maiduguri). Maiduguri is made up of districts and has an area of about 53 km² with a total population of about 689,212 (NPC, 2011). The climate of Maiduguri is hot and dry for most of the year; the period of rainfall lasts to an average of 120 days; the annual rainfall ranges from June to September; and the majority of the inhabitants of the city are farmers, civil servants, and businessmen and women. The state is facilitated with amenities including universities, polytechnics, colleges, and secondary and primary schools. It also has a teaching hospital, general hospitals, and many clinics, both from the government and private owners. The study will comprise Maiduguri Maximum Prison as the "Maximum Security Custodial Center" and Maiduguri New Prison as the "Medium Security Custodial Center," all situated within the state capital.

Research Design

The nature of the research problem and its objectives influenced the research design used in this study. As the study focused on the analysis of gender-based treatment of inmates in the Maiduguri custodial center, simple random sampling techniques were adopted to collect the sample. The research design functions as a systematic plan to outline the study and the research method of computation details on how the study will arrive at the conclusion and the research design's limitations, which include both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Population of the Study

The target populations of this research are female and male inmates of the Maiduguri Maximum Custodial Center and the Maiduguri Medium Custodial Center, comprising a total of 50 female convicts and 700 male convicts which gives the total population to 750 inmates. (Maiduguri Correction Service Officials 2016)

Sampling Technique

This study utilizes both random and purposeful methods in determining the sample size. The sample size of 254 is adequate for this study. Random selection was intended in order to give equal proportion and purposeful technique because of the special needs to select more of the female inmates. Respondents were reached through the assistance of the official of the custodial center. As a result of restriction on security ground. The questionnaires were distributed by the officials. A total of one hundred and fifty questionnaires were given to the prison officials at Maiduguri's new prison, and another hundred and four were given to officials at the Maiduguri maximum prison. The prison officials were informed to give more questionnaires to female inmates so as to achieve the objectives of the study.

Sample size

The population of this study is 750, which was obtained from the Nigerian Prison Service Officials (2016); therefore, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination was used to determine the sample size. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination, a population of seven hundred and fifty (750) will have two hundred and fifty-four (254) respondents as the sample. Therefore, a sample size of 254 was adequate for this study based on Krejcie & Morgan's table for sample size determination.

$$\frac{Z^2 \times P \times (1-P)}{e^2}$$

n = Nx

$$\frac{[N = 1 + \frac{Z^2 \times P \times (1 - P)}{e^2}]}$$

N = Population size

Z = Critical value of the normal distribution at the required confidence level

P = Sample proportion

Source of Data

The survey method was employed in this study. The data for this study was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary data came from a questionnaire and an in-depth interview with prison officials, ex-convicts, and members of the general public. Secondary data were also obtained from the review of relevant literature, such as books, newsletters, journals, articles, etc.

Data Collection Methods

The research instrument used was the quantitative method. The questionnaires were used as the quantitative method. These were administered to the respondents in person. The questionnaires were utilized only by the educated respondents. Relevant journals, books, reports, and seminar papers were used in generating secondary data.

Data Analysis Methods

The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics presented in tables as percentages. The responses of the inmates were analyzed using the SPSS package version 20 to deduce the findings of the research.

Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents on Socio-Demographic Characteristics

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29	68	26.8
	30-39	80	31.5
	40-49	85	33.5
	50 and above	21	8.3
Sex	Male	204	77.9
	Female	50	22.1
Marital Status	Single	86	33.9
	Married	161	63.4
	Divorced	7	2.8
Total		254	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2021

Tables 1 and 2 present the respondent's characteristics and the distribution of respondents by gender and type of crime committed. According to Table 1, the majority of the respondents were male (204, 77.9%), while (50, 22.1%), were female. A significant number of the respondents were aged 40-49 (85, 33.5%), and it was clear that the majority of them (161, 63.4%) were married. The majority of them (136, 53.5%) are not employed, with degree qualifications (98, 38.6%). The majority of the respondents (32.3%) who committed fraud were men. while the majority of the females (13, or 5.1%) commit homicide.

Unequal treatment of inmates based on gender

S/N	Variables	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Frequency/percentage
1.	Female inmates are given special consideration over male inmates.	111 44.0%	99 40.0%	2 1.0%	29 5.0%	13 10.0%	100%
2.	Female inmates are given special preference in correctional services.	81 32.0%	132 53.0%	5 2.0%	22 5.0%	14 8.0%	100%
3.	Female inmates are treated with leniency.	116 47.0%	121 46.0%	4 2.0%	5 3.0%	8 2.0%	100%
4.	Female inmates tend to have more privileges than male inmates.	50 20.0%	94 38.0%	18 7.0%	59 12.0%	33 23.0%	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2021

Table 3 indicates that a significant number of the respondents (116, 47.0%) strongly agree that female inmates are treated with leniency, while (4, 2.0%) of them are neutral. The respondents agree that female inmates have more privilege than male inmates, with 94 (38.0%) of them standing at neutral (18.0%). It is clear that female inmates are given special preference in prison, with (132, 53.0%) only (22, 5.0%) strongly disagreeing.

Discussions of results

This study looked into the gender-based treatment of inmates in Maiduguri correctional services. The discussions were based on the objectives of the study. The socio-demographic data revealed that the age limit of the inmates ranges from 20–29 years; however, those with an age close to 40–49 have the highest percentage, while 50 and above have the lowest percentage. The study also revealed that the sex of the respondent showed that male inmates had the highest percentage and female inmates had the lowest percentage. Also, the marital status of the respondent showed that married inmates had the highest percentage of the respondent, followed by the single inmate, who had the second highest percentage, and the divorced inmate, who had the lowest percentage of marital status.

Therefore, the first objective revealed the unequal treatment of inmates along gender lines. The study showed that 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that female inmates were given special consideration over their male counterparts. The study further revealed that 53% of the respondents were given preference in the correctional service. Another 47% agreed that female inmates were treated with leniency. Furthermore, the table revealed that 38% of the respondents agreed that female inmates tend to have more privileges than male inmates. The findings of this study contradict those of Heidensohn (1985), who revealed that women are treated more harshly when they deviate from societal norms of female sexuality. However, the study of Lloyd (1995) is in line with this study, which stated that women often use their "femininity" to their advantage, which makes it very difficult to argue for equal rights for both sexes.

Conclusion

The result of the study revealed that female inmates were treated with leniency and that most of the crimes they committed were minor.

In addition, the study indicated that, in general, there is no discrepancy in inmate treatment by the officials of the correctional facility. The study also revealed that both male and female inmates received equal treatment in the correctional system.

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