

**THE PSYCO – SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF HIV/AIDS TRANSMISSION IN  
NIGERIAN PRISON**

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**Abstract**

*The scourge of HIV/AIDS disease has remained an endemic plague among prison inmates in Nigeria over the years, owing to the unrestrained and unwarranted sexually related abuses among prison inmates and the administrative laxity on the part of officials charged with correctional services among the inmates. Also, governments at all levels*

*have failed to decongest prisons amidst the failure of the prison managers to control the spread of this deadly disease. This study interrogated the psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS transmission among inmates of in Enugu and Awka correctional centers. To achieve this objective the study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews and questionnaires administered on the prison managers and prison inmates as respondents. Secondary data were generated from academic journals, internet materials, official documents from the Nigerian prisons as well as other archival materials. This study raised some problematic in areas of: What measures have governments put in place to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS and other related abuses in Nigerian prisons? What are the challenges been face by the government towards decongesting prisons? What are the psycho-social practices that are prevalent among prison inmates? This paper sought for answers to these questions in relation to the various psycho-social practices among these inmates. The findings revealed a high prevalence of sexually related immoral acts through which HIV/AIDs has been spreading in prisons. It also exposed the contour of official complicity in encouraging the use of illicit drugs, diversion of allocations of funds and materials meant for inmates. The study explicates the negative trend that disposes the inmates to criminal practices which generally impact on the system adversely. The study thereby suggests the introduction of effective administrative inquiries and reforms in these prisons; the government should enthrone modern inmates' correctional practices that de-emphasize inmates' institutionalization through probation services to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in prisons.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human civilization is probably passing through a most critical moment of this millennium while its existence is being challenged by the surfacing of strange illnesses among which is HIV/AIDS. HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS, if not treated. The HIV/AIDs outbreak has been declared an international public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). The HIV and AIDS epidemic remains one of the greatest health and growth challenges of our time. The number of adults acquiring HIV each year has not declined considerably over the past ten years. The epidemic keeps claiming more than one million lives each year. Nigeria Country Report, (2018).

Prisoners are key populations for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Penal institutions all over the world anxious about the fast and uncontrolled distribution of HIV in prisons due to many specific risk factors, including availability of illegal drugs in prisons despite the sustained efforts of prison systems to prevent it, consensual and non-consensual sex occurrences in prisons, no withstanding laws or policies prohibiting sex in the prison, sharing of tattooing equipment by prisoners.. According to Bamigbose (2010), other risk factors like -Body piercing, Sharing of razor blades, Exposure to

human blood and body fluids through fights, assaults, and accidents also occur in the prisons. The disease remained pervasive in cramped, poorly ventilated prison facilities, which had chronic shortages of medical supplies as is the case in Nigeria prison. Inadequate medical treatment and bad living conditions caused many people in prisons to die from treatable illnesses such as HIV and AIDS. Factors related to the prison infrastructure, prison management and the criminal justice system also contribute to the increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other health risks in prisons.

A report of people in prisons' mortality in Nigerian prisons from 2007 to 2019 put the figure of deaths at 1066 persons out of which 85 are AIDS-related deaths. Prison Statistics.(2019). This high HIV prevalence has a health and psycho-social impact not only to the people in prisons but also those who manage them.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees the welfare of every citizen of the country. Apart from this, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rule for the Treatment of Offenders (UNSMR) emphasized the welfare of prisoners in its section 20 (1) & (20). The rationale behind these provisions are meant to ensure that ex-prisoners are able to return to the society as rehabilitated individuals who will be able to live a normal life and contribute to national development. However, the above mentioned provisions and similar ones only remain a document in the country and not the practice. On May 29, 2014, Gov. Ibikunle Amosun of Ogun State was reported to have broken into tears at the pitiable sight of inmates at Oba Prison in Abeokuta (Sun Newspapers, May 2014).

The Enugu prison, found in the heart of the coal city, were established in 1915. The prison from inception have a grave management problem due to the fact that out of the 638 spaces meant for the inmate, that it was overrun by 1,800 inmates who were faced on the environment with the issue of congestion at first instance. (premium times, 2016). A problem, Uchenwa (2016) observed that underage inmates were kept with much older and hardened criminals. The institution for Juveniles at Hill-top, Ngwo are no longer maintained thereby forcing the weak to be at the mercy of the strong. As weighty as this revelation is, the available or known policies for manning prison and rehabilitating minors are not operational. To accentuate this observation further, it was noted that the jail do not offer appropriate HIV treatment due to poor policies managements, among other abnormalities, in the handling of prisoners is a pointer to the fact that the rate of HIV/AIDS among prison inmates might be in ratio of 5 is to 7 times compared to the general population. In 2010 alone, it was generally observed that 20,000 people living with HIV/AIDS were held in states and federal prisons in Nigeria notwithstanding the poor environmental condition prevalence there in.

This unpredictable, fast spreading infectious disease has been causing universal awareness, anxiety and distress, all of which according to Bamigbose (2010) are natural psychological responses to the randomly changing condition. Most patients with serious, progressive illness face a range of psychological challenges, including the prospect of real and anticipated losses, worsening quality of life, the fear of physical decline and death, and coping with uncertainty, they are often reluctant to mention mood problems to their physicians. Also, depressive symptoms, such as fatigue or loss of appetite, can be attributable to HIV infection or medications. Some researchers are of the view that female prisoners suffer more psychological trauma than their male counterpart. Because of the risk of transmission, major and permanent changes are called for in sexual behavior and management of substance use, neither of which may be easily modifiable in the reality of Nigerian prison.

This study is set to determine the various ways in which HIV/AIDS epidemic have impacted the prisoners' mental health. Based on this background, the researcher is set to evaluate the relevant psychosocial consequences or implication of HIV/AIDS transmission in Nigeria prison.

Stigma as defined by Jombo (2016) as the presence of an undesirable or discrediting feature that an individual possesses which may lessen the status of an individual from a societal point of view. Stigma is a one of the psychosocial impacts of HIV/AIDS. It links a person to an undesirable stereotype, leading others to reduce the bearer from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. In the prison setting, a stigmatized patient is prone to seek medical care late and hide important medical history. This behavior, in sequence, increases the risk of disease transmission. Health crime as a result of the fear of being HIV positive has also been reported in the prisons, Orakwe, (2012). The WHO issued specific psychosocial considerations for abating the growing stigma of HIV/AIDS.

The pains of the weak and suppression by the strong among inmates makes the exposure and tackling of the ills/vices difficult in the prison. The prison is a vertically structured community consisting of three social classes resulting from physical violence and suppression among inmates: (1) the physically strong ones who are able to suppress others; (2) those who are respected; and (3) those who are suppressed. Also underage inmates were kept with much older and hardened criminals. There is the need for government to put appropriate measures in place to fix these conditions, in other to abate the resultant psychosocial implication on the prison inmate. Uchenwa (2016)

Prison managers turned blind eyes to the ills/vices going on in the prison. The prison services are, therefore, being blamed for the growth of criminal gangs in jails. There is no clear strategy for dealing with criminal gangs in prison, or adequate assessment of the

danger prisoners pose, worsening the case of HIV/AIDs prison inmate. The Journal.ie (2019). This results in the prisoners being abused by fellow inmates without any one to report to. This prison management attitude to work should be tackled in line with the behavioral reformation objective of keeping criminals in prison.

Gender psychosocial implication of HIV/AIDS prisoners transmission is not clear. Some researchers are of the view that a female HIV infected person are more strongly stigmatized and exposed than their male counterparts because of a stereotype in African society, that a woman who insists on use of condom during sexual intercourse is promiscuous, only men can. But other studies say that male and female are stigmatized equally since the both experience the same condition in the prison confinement.

According to a report by PRAWA, vice president Yemi Osinbajo lamented over the deplorable state of the country's prison and enouncement of the savage treatment of inmates is a remark that must be taken seriously if Nigerians have some regard for the overall health of the society. At an official presentation of Nigerian Prisons survey report in Abuja, he said that there is no room for prisoners and anybody who goes into that place as a human being coming out as an animal. PRAWA (2018).

Literature search revealed insufficient research reports on the psycho-social consequences of HIV/AIDS in prison inmates Odekunle, (2007). More so, the few studies on impact of HIV/AIDS on prison inmates in Nigeria are inconclusive on whether gender has any relevance on the nature of psycho-social implication suffered in the Nigerian prison and calls for further investigation. This study intends to fill this gap by contributing to the existing discussions.

### **Research problem**

Nigeria has a high HIV epidemic in the world, NACA (2017), and the prison population is at high risk of HIV and AIDs transmission. This is so because infection with this virus can occur as a result high rate of vulnerable behaviors that occur on daily basis, therein. According to Onuigwe, (2018), these unhealthy behaviors account for around 32% of new HIV infections in Nigeria.

Most people infected with HIV and aids in the prison struggle with psycho-social problems such as Stigma, suppression, negligence, guilt, isolation, distress, fear of rejection, depression and psychiatric disorder, shock and Hopelessness among others.

There appears to be paucity of research evidence available to the researcher on the psycho-social factors that affects the prison inmates in Nigeria. There is also no consensus on whether gender has any relevance on the nature of psycho-social implication suffered in the Nigerian prison.

The question therefore is “what is the psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS transmission in Nigeria prison ?

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to find out the psycho – social implications of HIV/AIDS transmission in Nigerian prison. Specifically, the study tried to determine the Psycho social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission in Enugu prison and the association between gender and Psycho-Social Implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prisons.

**Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

**Ho1:** There is no Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prisons

**Ho2:** There is no association between gender and prisoners' Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission.

**Methodology**

The design for this study is the case study research design. The study was carried out in Enugu Prison Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of 227 respondents, made up of 115 males and 112 females all of whom are prisoners in Enugu Prison. The entire population was used as the number was within manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was the Psycο–Social Implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigerian Prison, (PIHT). The questionnaire was a four point likert scale. Respondents were required to tick (✓) the option that best expresses their views about the statement made. Values of 4,3,2,and 1 were attached to SA, A, D, and SD, respectively. The Chi-Square statistic was used to test hypotheses. The hypotheses with negative Correlation Coefficient (v) were rejected, while those with positive Correlation (v) were accepted.

**Results**

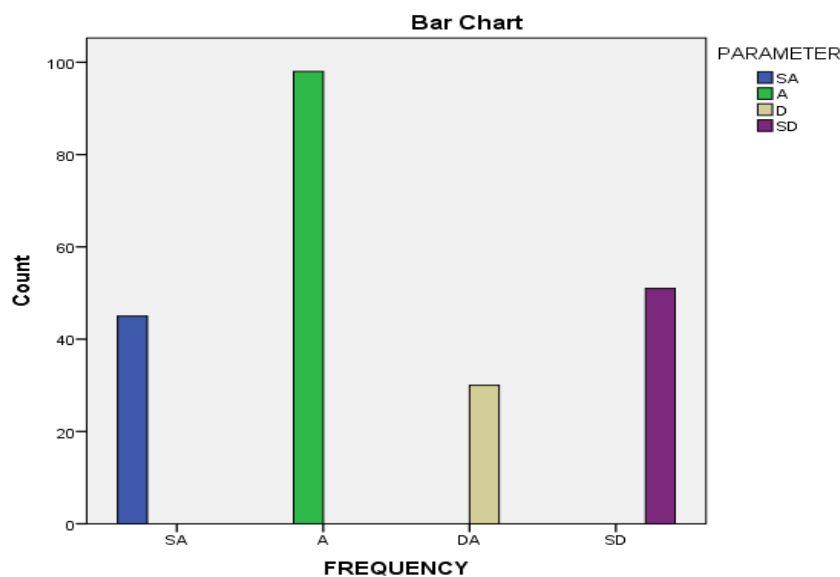
**Ho1:** There is no Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission in Enugu prison.

**Table1: Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission in Enugu prison.**

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	672.000 <sup>a</sup>	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	578.046	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	223.000	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	224		

a. 1 cells (6.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.02.

Table 1 shows that the calculated p-value is less than our chosen significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. There are psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prison prisons in Nigeria. This was so because  $X^2(9) < 672.000, p = 0.000$ .



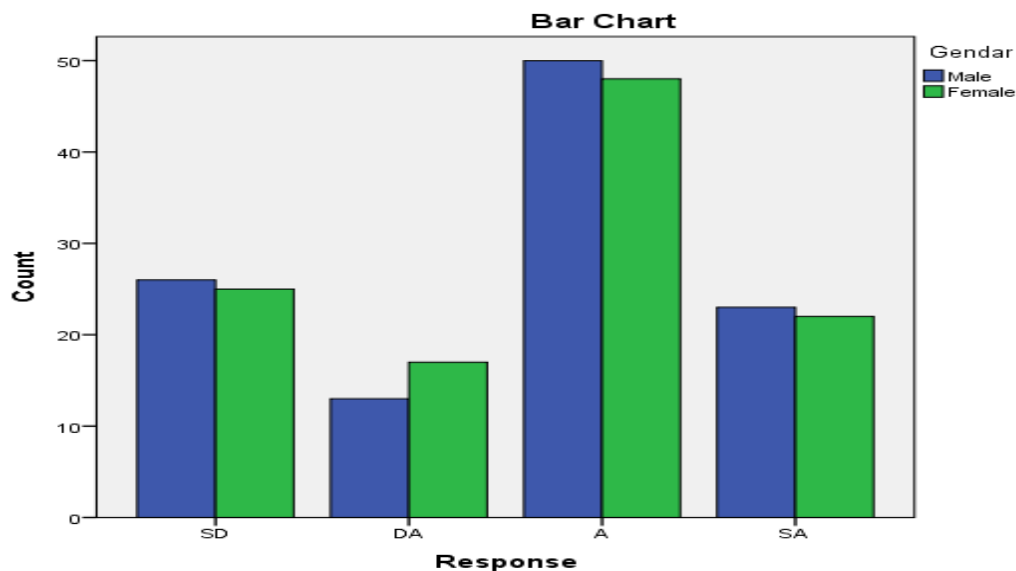
**H02:** There is no association between gender and prisoners' Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission.

**Table 2: Prisoners' Psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS Transmission by gender**

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.616 <sup>a</sup>	3	.893
Likelihood Ratio	.618	3	.892
Linear-by-Linear Association	.037	1	.848
N of Valid Cases	224		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.00.

Table 2 shows that the calculated p-value is greater than our chosen significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. There is no association between gender and psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prison prisons in Nigeria. This was so because  $X^2(9) > 0.616, p = 0.893$ .



### Findings

Based on the analysis of data as presented in this study, the following major findings were made:

There are psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prison prisons in Nigeria. There is no association between gender and psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prison prisons in Nigeria

### Discussions of findings

Table 1 revealed that there is psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prisons in Nigeria. This findings is in line with earlier findings of Bamigbose (2010), who stated that the prisoners encounter anxiety and depression, which are natural psychological responses to the randomly changing condition. The findings of this study corresponds also with the findings of Goffman (2010), Orakwe, (2012). Uchenna (2016). They all found that the prisoners suffer serious personality degradation as a result of abuses and inappropriate environmental condition prevalence in Nigeria prison.

The result of the findings in table 2 shows that there is no association between gender and psycho-social implications of HIV/AIDS Transmission in prisons in Nigeria. The result of the present study contradicts an earlier study by Taiwo (2015), who found out gender stereotype, sexual assertiveness and health locus of control were significant predictors of perceived vulnerability of female HIV patient prisoners. On the other hand, the finding of Abah (2014), agrees with the findings of the present study, he found out that both male and female are equally stigmatized.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study have clearly indicated that psychosocial implications are suffered by prisoners who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Also the study suggest that inmate of Nigeria prisons are composed of male and female and did not find any association between gender and psycho-social implication of HIV/AIDS. Both male and female are equally affected.

### **Recommendations**

Generally, the neglect of the prison population may be a reflection of the penal policy of the country, which emphasizes punishment and retribution at the expense of reformation and rehabilitation of offenders. If the nation must meet the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating HIV/AIDS and the stigma that is associated with it, then the penal philosophy, which guarantee the well-being of inmates in line with global developments must be put in place. When inmates in various prisons are not condemned and ostracized but are seen as part of the society. Even though our findings did not associate gender with psychosocial impact of HIV/AIDS, more inclusive study to ascertain the influence of gender factors as well as design of gender sensitivity programme is required in Nigeria prisons. It has become more imperative now, that Nigeria is among the 5 significant nations in the world that require attention to stem the next global wave of HIV/AIDS. USNIC (2012).

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