



## SOCIETAL LEVEL FACTORS AND RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN SELECTED PRISONS IN SOUTH-WESTERN, NIGERIA

**ABRIFOR, Chiedu Akporaro**

*Department of Criminology and Security Studies,  
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria.*

*Corresponding Email Address: [Chiedu.abrifor@fuoye.edu.ng](mailto:Chiedu.abrifor@fuoye.edu.ng)*

### ABSTRACT

*This study assessed the effect of societal level factors on recidivism among inmates in selected prisons in South-Western, Nigeria. This study adopted the descriptive and explorative research designs. Data was gathered using questionnaire survey and Key Informant Interview and was analyzed through quantitative and qualitative methods of triangulation. The sample size for this study was three hundred (300) inmates which comprises of inmates' from Ilesa, Ondo and Ado Prisons respectively. Selected Key Informants were selected purposively based on their relevant position and daily contact with inmates. The questionnaire survey was used to generate quantitative data while, the Key Informant Interview was used to obtain the qualitative data. The proportionate sampling technique was adopted and 45% proportionate was used in the selection of inmates from each prisons. The study revealed that societal level factors played greater roles in increasing the prevalent rate of recidivism among inmates in Nigerian Prisons. The study also found that there is a strong correlation between societal level factors (such as rejection by family members; societal stigmatization; unemployment; inadequate vocational training; acceptance by criminal peers in the society to mention but a few) and recidivism among inmates in Prisons across South-Western Nigerian. The study concludes that societal level factors played a major role in controlling and contributing to the prevalence of recidivism among inmates in Prisons. The study recommends that government should ensure that adequate sensitisation and orientation of Nigerian citizens and other stake holders on issues of inmates' rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration into the society. Also, the study recommends that citizens should not stigmatize ex-convicts; provision of employment opportunities; creation of functional and equipped vocational centres across prisons in Nigerian and provision of education up to tertiary institutions should be given to inmates to make them a better citizen after leaving the prisons.*

**Keywords:** *Societal level factors, Prison Inmates, Recidivism, South-Western Nigeria and Nigerian Prisons*

### INTRODUCTION

The major mandates of the Nigerian Prisons Service is the safe custody of the legally interned; apart from that, it is to ensure that the legally interned are reformed, rehabilitated and effectively reintegrated back to the society. This statement was buttressed by Ugwuoke and Otodo (2015) who opined that prison is a total institution and a place for the reformation and rehabilitation of those who have committed crime. Prison is a regimented, transitional and total enclosure where people who are convicted after trial and are physically confined for rehabilitation with a view to making them law-abiding and acceptable citizens in the mainstream society upon release.

Prisons, in the developing countries like Nigeria, today, the pain of jail confinement affects all prisoners in different ways. To begin with, the prisoners need to withstand the entry shock by adapting quickly to prison life. Prisoners are exposed to a new culture, which is very different from their own culture. While being in prison, the prisoner must determine his or her way of passing the time since hours appears endless. For some prisoners the major source of stress would include the loss of contact with family and friends outside the prison. There is also the fear of deterioration. There is lack of personal choice within the prison environment which may affect inmates. After many years of being told what to do, they may well lose the ability to think for themselves and make their own decisions and choices freely. The prisoners in Nigeria suffer from enforced idleness and spend a greater part of their time in prison in idleness. Further, facilities capable of exposing the inmates to acquisition of skills which are likely to keep them out of prisons are not in existence (Aduba, 1995). It is said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Prisoners left unoccupied with positive and constructive activities are likely to engage in vices, such as sale and abuse of drugs. They are also likely to perfect their criminal activities

by learning from one another new tricks involved in various crimes. Therefore, the state of idleness of the prisons falls short of international standards

Recidivism is a technical term which, if construed narrowly, by-passes the important problem it represents. The problem of persistency in criminal behaviour. However, recidivism has variously been defined as “return to custody for any reason, including technical violations” (Verbrugge, Nunes, Johnson and Taylor, 2002). Others sees it as re-arrest (Benda, 2005), reconviction (Law, 2004), and re-incarceration (Deschenes, Owen, and Crow, 2006). While some authors feel that there is need to standardize the definition of recidivism, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals noted in their volume, Corrections, (1973) that:

*“Recidivism is measured by (1) criminal acts that resulted in a conviction by a court, when committed by individuals who are under correctional supervision or who have been released from correctional supervision within the previous three years, and by (2) technical violations of probation and parole in which a sentencing or paroling authority took action that resulted in an adverse change in the offender’s legal status.”*

The various definitions and opinions on recidivism reveal the scope and severity of the present study which aggregates these definitions in its examination of prison inmate’s recidivistic tendencies in Nigeria. Recidivism cuts across all nations in the world with its negative consequences on individuals, and the social and economic spheres of life. Despite various intervention strategies, the rate of recidivism has been on the increase. Studies done by researchers have offered explanation on factors that could be responsible for the increase in the rate of recidivism. Some of the factors that could be responsible for an increase in the rate of recidivism among male ex-prisoners could be the harsh prison conditions and negative attitude of the public towards ex-convicts (Igbo and Ugwuoke, 2003). Data on recidivism around the world suggest that re-arrest may occur within the first year after release if no support is available to the released offender (Hassin, 1986). High rates of recidivism mean more crime, more victims, and more pressure on the criminal justice system. Soyombo (2009) cited by Abrifor, Atere and Muoghalu, (2012) opined that the prevalence rate of criminal recidivism in Nigeria in 2005 was 37.3%. Wilson (2009) cited by Oruta (2016) also reported that studies conducted in Nigeria have documented that 81% of male criminal inmate offenders and 45% of female criminal inmate offenders were rearrested within 36 months of discharge from the prison custody. Abrifor, et.al (2012) posits that recidivism has become very high and a common phenomenon among Nigerian subjects, both the male and female prisoners in the Nigerian prison custody. The reasons that people reoffend vary. The degree to which any particular factor may cause someone to commit another crime is unclear. Therefore, there are several factors that influence recidivism among ex-offenders. Such factors include: Poor Rehabilitation Model of the Nigerian Prison System, stigmatization, unemployment, inadequate vocational training and education Ugwuoke (2015). Igbo and Ugwuoke (2003) published the findings of a study they conducted with a sample of 200 prisoners in Enugu prison, southeast Nigeria, with the intention of finding out the factors contributing to high recidivism in Enugu prison. The findings revealed that there is actually a high recidivism rate in Enugu prison which the researchers attributed to poor environmental conditions of the prison and the negative attitude of the public towards ex-convicts as the two major factors.

In recent time, recidivism has not only been on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa, but has become a major social problem to the society, governments, multinational humanitarian organizations and the entire world. Discharged prisoners find it difficult to reintegrate into the society because of some social and cultural factors which seem to inhibit all efforts geared

towards their rehabilitation and reintegration (Osayi, 2013). Despite the bad situation surrounding Nigeria prison system ex-prisoners continues to reoffend and reconvicted when the prison condition is supposed to repel them for life. Therefore, this research focused on the societal level factors (factors that are controlled by the society) and how this factors influence people in such a way that they persist in criminal act and continue to be rearrested and reconvicted.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized three Nigerian Prisons Services located in the south-Western part of Nigeria. Specifically located in Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states respectively were considered for the study. The study was descriptive in nature. It adopted a cross-sectional research design. Both questionnaire and Key Informant Interview were used for the study. The questionnaire was administered to the larger proportion of the respondents. The sample size for the study was three hundred (300) inmates which comprised of inmates' in Ilesa, Ondo and Ado prisons respectively. The proportionate sampling technique was adopted and 45% proportionate was used in the selection of inmates from each prisons. It should be mentioned that these set of inmates are all entitled to the same treatment in all the prison service in Nigeria. Data collected and gathered from the field was analyzed using quantitative data analysis, the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency table and percentiles distribution were employed. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used to analyse the quantitative data. Before embarking on this study, a letter of notification was sent to the Prison Officials, stating the reason(s) and time of visit. Since this study adopted both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection, the researcher employed an assistant for effective data collection. Furthermore, in order not to bridge the ethical standards on research work involving human subjects, this research put into proper consideration the principles aimed at protecting the right and privacy of every participants who in the course of this study were requested to provide confidential information that will aid the success of the research. And finally, some motivating techniques will be used such as buying some item for the respondents so as to create a good atmosphere of communication with the respondents.

**Table 1 Descriptive Analysis of Socio-Demographic and Economic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables		Freq	%
<b>Sex</b>	Male	297	99.0
	Female	3	1.0
<b>Total</b>		300	100.0
<b>Age</b>	less than 18	7	2.3
	18-20 years	32	10.7
	21-30 years	143	47.7
	31-40 years	84	28
	41-50 years	20	6.7
	51-60 years	11	3.7
	61 and above	3	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	300	100.0
<b>Religion</b>	Christianity	214	71.3
	Islam	79	26.3
	Traditional	7	2.3
	<b>Total</b>	300	100.0
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	FSLC	58	19.3
	WASC/GCE/SSCE	130	43.3
	NCE/OND/ND	92	30.7
	Degree/HND	20	6.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	300	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	156	52.0
	Married	133	44.3
	Divorced	11	3.7
	<b>Total</b>	300	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>	Trading	98	32.7
	Farming	43	14.3
	Student	31	10.3
	Civil servant	22	7.3
	Driver/Cyclist	106	35.3
	<b>Total</b>	300	100.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Yoruba	211	70.3
	Igbo	69	23.0
	Hausa	20	6.7
	<b>Total</b>	300	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The result shows that 297(99.0%) of the respondents are male while the remaining 3(1.0%) are female. Data on age distribution of the respondents shows that 47.7%(143)of the total respondents falls in the age bracket between 21-30 years, 28.0%(84) are within the age range of 31-40 years, 32(10.7%) are within age 18-20 years, 20(6.7%) are 41-50 years, 11(3.7%) are within age 51-60 years, 7(2.3%) are within the age less than 18 years, while the remaining which account for 1% of the total respondents are 61 years and above. The result indicates that majority of the respondents are in their youthful age of 18-40 years are in jail from which we can infer that most of the people in jail constitute the active working force who are supposed to contribute to the development of the state. Also it can be inferred that people who fall in age less than 18 and above 61 years old are less likely to commit crime and be imprisoned. The table above also shows the religion distribution of respondents. It is revealed that 214(71.3%) of the total respondents are Christians, 79(26.3%) are Muslim while the remaining 7(2.3%) practice traditional religion. Data on educational qualification distribution of the respondents shows that 58(19.3%) of the total respondents are first school leavers, 130(43.3%) possess O'Level certificates, 92 (30.7%) have either NCE/ND certificate, while the remaining 20 possess Bachelor Degree or Higher national diploma

certificate in various discipline. From this result we can infer that most of the inmates in prisons in the South-Western Nigeria are not educated up to the tertiary level. Data on marital status shows that 156(52.0%) respondents are single, 133(44.3%) are married while 11(3.7%) of the respondents are divorced. The occupation distribution of the respondents is presented shows that 98(32.7%) of the respondents engaged in trading activities, 43(14.3%) are farmers, 31(10.3%) are students, 22(7.3%) are civil servants while 106 (35.3%) are driver/cyclists. This result indicates that drivers/cyclist often engage in social vices which land them in prison. Data on ethnicity shows that 211(70.3%) of the respondents are Yoruba, 69(23.0%) are Igbo while the remaining 20(6.7%) are Hausa. The result implies that Yoruba dominate the visited prisons.

**Table 2 Descriptive Analysis of Queries on Recidivism**

Variables		Freq	%
<b>Is this your first time in prisons?</b>	Yes	233	77.7
	No	67	22.3
	Total	300	100.0
<b>If YES, what offence brought you here?</b>	Cultism/Drugs	29	12.5
	Stealing/Robbery	146	62.7
	Murder	12	5.1
	Fraud/Impersonation	17	7.3
	Assault/Damages	29	12.4
	Total	233	100.0
<b>If NO, what offence got you imprisoned the first time?</b>	Cultism/Drugs	4	6.0
	Stealing/Robbery	32	47.8
	Murder	3	4.5
	Fraud/Impersonation	11	16.4
	Assault/Damages	17	25.4
	Total	67	100.0
<b>The first time you were in jail how long did you serve?</b>	less than a year	20	29.9
	1-2years	25	37.3
	3-4 years	9	13.43
	5 -6 years	7	10.4
	7 -8 years	3	4.5
	9-10 years	1	1.5
	11years and above	2	3
	Total	67	100.0
<b>This present jail term is what number of time you will be in jail?</b>	second time	48	71.6
	third time	11	16.4
	fourth time	5	7.5
	More	3	4.5
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 2 shows the data of the respondents on whether this is their first time in prison. 233(77.7%) of the respondents are just coming to the prison for the first time while 67(22.3%). Table above shows the result of various offence that brought the 233 first timers to the prison, 29(12.5%) of them are convicted for cultism/drugs, 146 are charged for stealing and robbery, 12 have murder cases, 17 are charged for fraud and impersonation while the remaining 29 are charged for assault and damages. More so, the table shows that 67 respondents that have been in the prison for more than one time were imprisoned the first time for series of offences. 4(6.0%) respondents were convicted for cultism/drugs, 32 were charged for stealing and robbery, 3 had murder cases, 11 were charged for fraud and impersonation while the remaining 7 were convicted for assault and public disorder. Data shows the number of years the



recidivists serve in their first time in jail. The data shows that 25(37.3%) of the respondents served jail term between 1-2years, 20(29.9%) served for less than a year, 9(13.43%) served for 3-4years, 7(10.4%) served 5-6 years term, 3(4.5%) served 7-8 years, 2 served more than 11years term while the remaining 1 respondent served 9-10 years in their first imprisonment. Table above shows that 34(50.4%) of the 67 recidivists jail term was awaiting trial while the remaining 33(49.3%) were convicted. Data shows the offences that brought the recidivists back to jail are presented. The result shows that 6(9.0%) were charge for drug dealings, 31 were charged for robbery and stealing, 7 had murder cases, 9 committed fraud, 14 engaged in assault such as rapping, fighting and other damages. This implies that as a result of exclusion and rejection of ex-prisoners by members of outside society the ex-prisoners strive for survival in meeting up daily needs especially feeding and clothing so they commit crime related to theft. The table shows that that 43.6% of recidivist went back to prison because of stealing and robbery. Furthermore, the number of the present jail term were presented in table above. The result shows that 48(71.6%) are coming to jail for the second time, 11(16.4%) are on their third term, 5 are coming for the fourth time, while the remaining 3 respondents have been in prisons more than four times number of time. This implies that fewer number of ex-prisoners recidivist after second imprisonment.

**Table 3 Descriptive Analysis of Reaction of People to Recidivists (Correlates of Societal Level Factors and Recidivism among Inmates)**

<b>Variables</b>		<b>Freq</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Were you welcomed or treated well by the people you knew before imprisonment at your first release?</b>	Yes	19	28.4
	No	29	43.3
	Yes but partially	19	28.4
	Total	67	100.0
<b>how they are treated after their first release by Family Members</b>	very bad	26	38.8
	Rejected	12	17.9
	Indifferent	10	14.9
	Supportive	19	28.4
	Total	67	100.0
<b>how they are treated after their first release by Friends</b>	very bad	14	20.9
	Rejected	24	35.8
	Indifferent	10	14.9
	Supportive	19	28.4
	Total	67	100.0
<b>how they are treated after their first release by Neighbors</b>	very bad	16	23.9
	Rejected	25	37.3
	Indifferent	17	25.4
	Supportive	9	13.4
	Total	67	100.0
<b>how they are treated after their first release by Religious group</b>	very bad	10	14.9
	Rejected	18	26.9
	Indifferent	8	11.9
	Supportive	31	46.3
	Total	67	100.0
<b>how they are treated after their first release by Town people</b>	very bad	28	41.8
	Rejected	23	34.3
	Indifferent	7	10.4
	Supportive	9	13.4
	Total	67	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 3 above shows that 19(28.4%) of the respondents were welcomed or treated well by the people they knew before imprisonment at their first release, 29(43.3%) reject this while the remaining 19 affirmed that they get partial support. Data of respondents on how family members treated the respondents after their first release. The result shows that 26(38.8%) of the respondents are treated badly by their family members, 12(17.9%) were rejected, 10(17.9%) are indifferent about their treatment while 19(28.4%) were supported. Table on how the respondents are treated after their first release by friends. The result shows that 14(20.9%) of the respondents are treated very badly, 24(35.8%) were rejected, 10(14.9%) are indifferent while 19(28.4%) were supported. Data on how the respondents are treated after their first release by neighbours shows that 16(30.9%) of the respondents are treated very badly, 25(37.3%) were rejected, 17(25.4%) are indifferent while 9(13.4%) were supported. Data on how the respondents are treated after their first release by religious group. The result shows that 10(14.9%) of the respondents are treated very badly, 18(26.9%) were rejected, 8(11.9%) are indifferent while 31(46.3%) were supported. More so, data on how the respondents are treated after their first release by their town people. The result shows that 28(41.8%) of the respondents are treated very badly, 23(34.3%) were rejected, 10(10.4%) are indifferent while 9(13.4%) were supported.

However, the responses of the key informant interview indicated that majority of the officials are of the opinion that lack of support and rejection of ex-prisoners is the most responsible factor for recidivism. An official (key informant) explains further by saying

*“the Nigerian prison has tried enough in rehabilitating, reforming and reintegrating the prisoners by giving them necessary vocational skills, giving them proper education and making them fit for the society but it is however, painful that their own people reject them”.*

*Ado prison official*

Another key informant said:

*“that the greatest challenge for the prison service to properly reintegrate inmates is the way people reject them after release.*

*Ondo Prison official*

When officials were asked about how family members, friends and relatives support inmates they state that prisoners only get support at early stage of imprisonment and the more time prisoners spend the lower the support they get till they finally have no support. This reply is the same with all the prison officials that one of them said:

*“the only prisoners that have support till they are released are only those that spend only few months let’s say like 6-12 months and anything beyond that inmates get close to no support and in only very few cases do inmates that spend longer period get support be it visitation, financial or even food. Ilesha prison official”*

Recidivism cannot be stopped however; it can be reduced through sensitization of the public about the ex-convict with the use of various mass media such as the television and radio

### **Test of Hypotheses**

The inferential statistics chi square was used to test the Hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis considered relevant questions as they relate to each hypothesis.

#### **Hypothesis 1:**

H0 – there is no significant relationship between societal level factors and Recidivism

H1 – there is significant relationship between societal level factors and Recidivism



## Test statistics on the relationship between societal level factors and Recidivism

**Table 4 Chi-Square Analysis on the Relationship between Societal Level Factors (SLFs) and Recidivism**

	There is no significant relationship between societal level factors and Recidivism
<b>Chi-Square</b>	6.582
<b>Df</b>	1
<b>Asymp.Sig</b>	.010

Source: Field Survey, 2018

0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than  
The minimum expected cell frequency is 33.5.

Table above shows the summary of chi-square result of the relationship between Societal Level Factors (SLFs) and Recidivism. From the table, the result indicates a chi-square value of 6.582<sup>a</sup>, degree of freedom of 1 and p-value of 0.0100, that is  $X^2(1) = 6.582$ ,  $p = 0.010$ . This implies that there is a strong significant relationship between Societal Level Factors and Recidivism at 0.05 level of significance.

From the above result, it is evident that the Prob. of t-statistics (0.010) is less than 0.05 level of significance, ( $0.010 < 0.05$ ) the study reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which state that there is no relationship between Societal Level Factors and Recidivism, as a result, the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section provides the discussion of research findings as they relate to the objectives of the study. it was found that most of the recidivist after their previous imprisonment were not accepted back in their previous homes and this left them with no option in the absence of family support to stay with friends that researchers from the past has proved that ex-prisoners who do not get family support end up being accepted by deviants or criminal neighbours' and in this criminal environment they pick new friends who are likely to make them go back to crime. This is very much in line with the statement generated from Lisa and Spencer (2013) in their research they opine that neighbourhood characteristics are likely to influence an ex-prisoners' risk of re-offending following their resettlement back into society.

### Conclusion

In conclusion there is a significant relationship between societal level factors and recidivism. And social influences on recidivism are supposed to be given more attentions. Culture of the southwestern people of Nigeria of not neglecting their family members has played major role in controlling the prevalence of recidivism among them. Although the kind of friends and neighbourhood chosen by ex-prisoners contribute greatly to re-offending thereby leading to recidivism.

### Recommendations

From the result of the study recommendations for controlling recidivism are as follows:  
The Nigeria Prisons system should equip inmates not only with vocational skills but should give them adequate education up to tertiary institutions. From the result it is deduced that most inmates in the prisons do not have tertiary education and do not have access to good jobs when released. It was also recommended for the sensitization of the general public about treatment of inmates after imprisonment with the use of various mass-media and social-media. The people should be encouraged to treat ex-prisoners with love, acceptance and avoid stigmatization and rejection.



Further recommended in the study was for the welfare department to do enough work in helping inmates to develop good self-esteem and self-knowledge. Since peer delinquency and other controls do not fully account for delinquent behaviour, it is possible that an altered self-concept independently affects recidivism (Bernbug, Khron, and Rivera cited in Ascani 2011). However, the families of inmates should be encouraged to give adequate support to them from imprisonment till after release and the Government should specially create employment opportunities for ex-prisoners. There must also be proper orientation of the general public about law, code of conduct to mention but a few through various mass media and in various local dialects so that even uneducated individuals will be able to comprehend.

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