

# Comparative Analysis of Inmate Adjustment Levels and Psychological Profiles of First-Time Offenders awaiting Trial and Convicted Prisoners in Selected Nigerian Correctional Facilities

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## ABSTRACT

*Adjustment of inmates is a key factor in the prisonization process, impacting their emotional, physical, moral, and psychological well-being, both during incarceration and after release. Poor prison conditions contribute to traumatic experiences, affecting inmates' self-esteem, feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation. This study examines the adjustment of inmates based on their prison status in Nigerian correctional centers. Using a cross-sectional design, 278 inmates (69.4% male, 30.6% female) from maximum prison, Olodi-Apapa, were sampled. Instruments used included the Prison Adjustment Inventory, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, and Beck's Hopelessness Scale. Three hypotheses were tested using ANOVA, T-test, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed a significant joint influence of suicidal ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, and trauma on prison adjustment ( $R^2 = .428$ ;  $F = 40.68$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, self-esteem ( $t = 4.14$ ,  $\beta = .197$ ;  $p < .01$ ), loneliness ( $t = 7.004$ ,  $\beta = .403$ ;  $p < .05$ ), hopelessness ( $t = 5.212$ ,  $\beta = .315$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and trauma ( $t = -2.265$ ,  $\beta = -.119$ ;  $p < .05$ ) were found to have significant independent influences on prison adjustment. However, suicidal ideation ( $t = .750$ ,  $\beta = .041$ ;  $p > .05$ ) did not have a significant independent influence on prison adjustment. Furthermore, the study found no significant influence of time spent in prison on prison adjustment ( $F(278) = .878$ ;  $p > .05$ ), and no significant influence of sex on prison adjustment ( $t = -1.996$ ;  $p > .05$ ). The study concludes that prison adjustment is not determined by the status of inmates. The government and prison authorities should provide inmates with coping strategies such as religious activities, vocational programs, and education to aid reintegration into society.*

**Keywords:** prison adjustment, trauma, self-esteem, hopelessness, suicide ideation

## INTRODUCTION

Adjustment of inmates is a critical element in the process of prisonization, encompassing emotional, physical, moral, and psychological issues that impact both prison life and post-release adaptation. Due to the poor conditions prevalent in many prison environments, convicted criminals and awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) are subjected to traumatic experiences that negatively affect their self-esteem, largely due to environmental changes, loss of freedom, loneliness, and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation (Akinlabi, 2019; Otu, 2021). The challenge of adjusting to prison life has its roots in the pioneering work of Clemmer (1940), who coined the term “prisonization,” to describe the adoption of the subculture, customs, and mores within the penitentiary. Clemmer’s (1940) study of maximum-security prison life increased awareness of the latent inmate community that exists alongside the formal structure of the prison. He argued that all inmates experience “universal factors of prisonization,” such as accepting an inferior role, adhering to the institution’s regulations, and becoming passive in response to their needs, which are largely taken care of by the institution (Clemmer, 1940).

The process of prison adjustment is deeply intertwined with the prison subculture, which provides the foundation for how inmates cope with their new environment. Obioha (1995) notes that this culture is dynamic and involves a continuous reorientation of values and internalization of institutional norms. In the context of Nigerian prisons, where conditions are often deplorable, understanding prison adjustment is particularly important, as it remains a vital aspect of the prison experience for both awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) and convicted inmates, despite limited research on the topic (Oluwole & Ogunsanmi, 2021). Incarcerated individuals are removed from their communities and families, stripped of the autonomy to live and work freely, and are exposed to violence and constant concern for personal safety (UNODC, 2013; Walmsley, 2012).

The psychological toll of imprisonment is substantial. For example, Abbott (1982) captured the constant fear that permeates prison life, stating, “Everyone is afraid... it is a practical matter. If you don’t threaten someone at the very least, someone will threaten you.” In Nigerian prisons, this atmosphere of fear is compounded by issues such as overcrowding, violence, isolation, and inadequate mental health services (Global Prison Trends, 2016). Prisons, intended as rehabilitative institutions, often do more harm than good, inflicting profound psychological and physical trauma on inmates (Awe & Salawu, 2018). The pain of confinement manifests differently among inmates, but nearly all are affected in some capacity.

The distinction between convicted prisoners and awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) is significant; however, both groups share many of the negative experiences of imprisonment, with convicted prisoners serving court-imposed sentences and ATPs being detainees awaiting trial or sentencing (Walmsley, 2012). Despite the difference in legal status, ATPs are often housed alongside convicted inmates and subjected to the same harsh conditions; in Nigeria, they constitute a staggering 72.7% of the prison population as of July 27, 2020, underscoring systemic failures in the

criminal justice process (Otu, 2021). Although ATPs have not been convicted, they often endure the same stigmatization and harsh conditions as sentenced prisoners (UNODC, 2013).

The deplorable conditions in Nigerian prisons, as documented in multiple reports, present unique challenges for both convicted prisoners and ATPs. Prisoners are subjected to overcrowding, inadequate food and water, poor medical care, and constant exposure to extreme heat, leading to severe health issues and, in some cases, death (Human Rights Watch, 2015). These conditions further complicate the adjustment process, as inmates are forced to navigate a hostile and unsanitary environment while contending with the psychological toll of incarceration (Adebayo, 2020).

The mental health challenges of prison adjustment are particularly acute. Studies indicate that the prevalence of mental health disorders among inmates is significantly higher than in the general population, with conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder being widespread (Global Prison Trends, 2016; Ogunleye & Adefolaju, 2020). These issues are often exacerbated by overcrowding, violence, lack of privacy, isolation, and insufficient access to mental health services. Adjustment to prison life, therefore, involves not only physical adaptation to the conditions of confinement but also a significant psychological adjustment, as inmates struggle to maintain their mental well-being (Adeoye, 2019).

Prison adjustment, for the purposes of this study, refers to the behavioral and psychological adaptations inmates make to cope with incarceration. This includes the way individuals respond to the prison subculture, how they manage the harsh realities of prison life, and how these adaptations influence their reintegration into society after release. The conditions within prisons today necessitate a deeper understanding of how inmates whether awaiting trial or convicted adjust to their environment, and how their mental health and well-being can be better supported to ensure successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Oladipo & Akinbode, 2019).

The adjustment process of inmates, particularly first-time offenders awaiting trial (ATPs) and convicted prisoners, is a complex phenomenon influenced by several psychological factors, including suicidal ideation, loneliness, hopelessness, trauma and other demographic variables such as sex of inmate and time spent in prison.

Suicidal ideation refers to thoughts about, consideration of, or planning for suicide, and it is often prevalent in correctional settings due to the harsh living conditions, isolation, and psychological strain that prisoners endure. In African correctional facilities, including Nigeria, these conditions are exacerbated by overcrowding, inadequate mental health services, violence, and poor infrastructure (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2016; Osasona & Koleoso, 2015). First-time offenders awaiting trials are particularly vulnerable to suicidal ideation, given their uncertain legal status and the traumatic shift from a free society to a restrictive environment. In Nigeria, over 70% of the prison population comprises ATPs, many of whom languish in detention for extended periods without trial, subject to the same conditions as convicted prisoners (Walmsley, 2016). This prolonged uncertainty, combined with overcrowded and inhumane prison environments, has been shown to contribute to elevated levels of psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts (Osasona &

Koleoso, 2015). The shock of sudden incarceration, coupled with the anxiety of awaiting legal outcomes, often results in significant difficulties in adjusting to prison life (Kamaruddin, Ibrahim & Ali, 2021). Convicted prisoners, though more likely to have adapted to some extent, also face a heightened risk of suicidal ideation. Studies conducted in African prisons show that convicted prisoners often experience hopelessness, a lack of autonomy, and severe mental health deterioration as they come to terms with their prolonged sentences (Nwaopara & Stanley, 2021). In Nigeria, the inadequate provision of mental health services in prisons leaves many convicted prisoners without proper support, resulting in a greater incidence of psychological issues, including suicidal ideation (Osasona & Koleoso, 2015). Research indicates that convicted prisoners who struggle to adjust to the prison subculture, particularly those who experience extreme isolation or violence, are more likely to engage in suicidal behavior as a coping mechanism (Otu, 2019).

Loneliness is a significant factor affecting the adjustment levels of inmates, particularly first-time offenders awaiting trials (ATPs) and convicted prisoners. Loneliness, defined as the subjective distress caused by perceived social isolation, is common in prisons due to the removal of inmates from their familiar social networks and the restricted communication with the outside world. This sense of isolation can exacerbate the difficulties inmates face in adjusting to the harsh realities of prison life, including the loss of autonomy, physical confinement, and exposure to violence (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2016; Mohale & Mokoena, 2019).

In Nigerian prisons, where ATPs constitute a significant proportion of the incarcerated population, the experience of loneliness can be particularly acute. ATPs, often held for prolonged periods without trial, face legal uncertainty while enduring the same deprivations as convicted prisoners. This combination of uncertainty and isolation creates a unique psychological burden that often manifests in feelings of loneliness, which can hinder their ability to adjust to the prison environment (Walmsley, 2016; Ugwuogbu, 2017). Research has shown that loneliness among ATPs is strongly associated with negative psychological outcomes, including depression and anxiety, which further complicate the adjustment process (Onyedika-Ugoeze, 2019).

Convicted prisoners also experience loneliness, particularly during the initial stages of their incarceration. The transition from freedom to confinement, coupled with the loss of social support from family and friends, contributes to a heightened sense of isolation. For many convicted prisoners, the lack of meaningful interaction with others whether fellow inmates or prison staff aggravates feelings of loneliness, making it difficult to adjust to prison routines and subcultures (Kamaruddin, Ibrahim & Ali, 2021). In a study conducted in South African correctional facilities, Mohale and Mokoena (2019) found that prolonged isolation and the absence of family visits significantly increased feelings of loneliness among inmates, leading to maladaptive behaviors and psychological distress.

Hopelessness is a significant psychological issue experienced by inmates, particularly first-time offenders awaiting trials (ATPs) and convicted prisoners. It profoundly impacts their ability to adjust to the prison environment. In correctional facilities across Nigeria and Africa, hopelessness

stems from various factors, such as overcrowded conditions, uncertainty about the legal process, long detention periods without trial, poor access to mental health services, and the violent and dehumanizing atmosphere in prisons (Agboola & Alao, 2019; Oladipo, 2020). Research has demonstrated that the level of hopelessness among inmates is directly linked to their mental health outcomes, which in turn affects their adjustment to prison life (Adeyemi & Fakunle, 2021).

For first-time offenders awaiting trial, the feelings of hopelessness are exacerbated by the uncertainty of their legal status. Many ATPs endure prolonged pre-trial detention, sometimes lasting years, without knowing when or if their cases will be resolved (Otu, 2021). This situation often leads to despair, anxiety, and a sense of helplessness, as they are unable to control the outcome of their situation. According to a study conducted by Uche (2019), ATPs in Nigerian prisons were more likely to report high levels of hopelessness compared to convicted prisoners, as the lack of resolution in their cases contributed to their inability to adjust to the prison environment. This persistent sense of hopelessness was also associated with increased psychological distress and a higher likelihood of maladaptive behaviors, including aggression and withdrawal (Osasona & Koleoso, 2015).

Convicted prisoners, on the other hand, often experience hopelessness as a result of the harsh conditions of their imprisonment and the perceived lack of opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In Nigeria, prison conditions are frequently characterized by overcrowding, inadequate medical care, and poor living standards, all of which contribute to a pervasive sense of despair among inmates (Nwaopara & Stanley, 2021).

Trauma, particularly psychological trauma, significantly influences the adjustment levels of inmates, including first-time offenders awaiting trials (ATPs) and convicted prisoners. Trauma is a common experience among inmates due to factors such as prior victimization, violent environments, and the inherent stressors of incarceration (Nwokocha, 2019; Agbakwuru & Alabi, 2021). These traumatic experiences have a profound impact on inmates' mental health and their ability to adjust to the harsh and often violent prison environment.

In Nigerian prisons, the relationship between trauma and adjustment is particularly pronounced due to the deplorable conditions that characterize many correctional facilities. Overcrowding, lack of access to mental health services, and the prevalence of violence within prisons exacerbate the traumatic experiences of inmates, making it difficult for them to adjust to their new realities (Nwaopara & Stanley, 2021). In a study by Agbakwuru and Alabi (2021), it was found that Nigerian inmates who reported higher levels of trauma exposure both prior to and during incarceration were more likely to exhibit symptoms of psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, which negatively impacted their adjustment to prison life. This trauma-related distress also contributed to an increase in violent incidents within the prison, as inmates struggled to cope with the mental and emotional challenges posed by their traumatic experiences.

According to Ogunleye and Adefolaju (2020) and Ugwu and Onyema (2021), the time an inmate spends in prison and their sex are significant factors influencing psychological adjustment and overall adaptation to the prison environment. For first-time offenders awaiting trial (ATPs)

and convicted prisoners, these factors determine how well or poorly they cope with incarceration. Studies conducted across Nigeria and Africa emphasize that longer incarceration periods often exacerbate mental health challenges, while gender differences shape unique experiences and coping mechanisms within the prison system. Time spent in prison is particularly crucial in determining adjustment levels, as prolonged incarceration tends to heighten feelings of despondency, anxiety, and other adverse psychological outcomes (Ogunleye & Adefolaju, 2020). In Nigeria, ATPs, in particular, are subjected to prolonged detention due to a slow judicial process, which leaves many individuals languishing in prison for years without trial (Otu, 2021). This uncertainty, coupled with the length of detention, creates a sense of helplessness and negatively impacts their ability to adapt to prison life. A study by Adebayo (2020) found that inmates who had been imprisoned for extended periods exhibited significantly lower levels of psychological adjustment, particularly those who had no prior experience with the justice system. The prolonged waiting period often heightens feelings of frustration and can lead to more pronounced psychological maladjustment, including aggression, withdrawal, and anxiety.

The sex of the inmate also plays a critical role in influencing adjustment levels. Male and female inmates often have differing psychological responses to imprisonment due to gender-specific stressors. For male inmates, the prison environment is generally more physically violent, and masculinity norms may pressure them to suppress vulnerability and emotions (Ugwu & Onyema, 2021). This often leads to maladaptive coping strategies such as aggression and withdrawal from social interactions, ultimately impacting their adjustment. A study by Adeoye (2019) in Nigerian prisons found that male inmates, especially first-time offenders, were more likely to report issues with anger management and hostility, which hindered their ability to adjust positively to the prison environment. Female inmates, on the other hand, often face different challenges, such as sexual harassment, limited privacy, and a greater sense of social isolation, which can complicate their adjustment (Ogunleye & Adefolaju, 2020). Women are generally more likely to internalize their emotions, leading to higher levels of depression and anxiety compared to their male counterparts (Oluwole & Ogunsanmi, 2021). Additionally, societal expectations regarding femininity and the stigma surrounding female imprisonment in African cultures exacerbate the psychological toll on female prisoners. According to Ugwu and Onyema (2021), female inmates in Nigerian prisons report higher rates of psychological distress and lower levels of adjustment than male inmates, largely due to the social stigma attached to women in prison and their heightened vulnerability to abuse within the system. The deprivation model of prison adjustment posits that the harsh conditions and structural organization within prisons lead inmates to adopt countercultures as coping mechanisms for the pains of imprisonment (Sykes & Messinger, 1960; Thomas & Petersen, 1977; Tittle, 1972). These deprivations such as powerlessness, alienation, and limited interaction with external society—shape inmates' attitudes, behaviors, and psychological adjustments. This theory highlights the influence of environmental factors on prison adjustment, including variables like lone-



liness, hopelessness, and trauma, which are pivotal in understanding inmates' mental well-being and adaptation (Guenther, 1978; Neal, Snyder & Balogh, 1974; Smith & Hepburn, 1979).

In contrast, the importation model emphasizes the role of pre-prison experiences and personal characteristics in shaping inmates' prison behaviors. Factors such as prior criminal history, socioeconomic background, and attitudes toward authority are imported into the prison setting, influencing inmates' adjustment processes (Irwin, 1970; Irwin & Cressey, 1962). This framework aligns with variables like self-esteem and suicidal ideation, reflecting the interplay of inmates' pre-existing traits and their ability to adapt to prison life (Alpert, 1979; Schwartz, 1971; Thomas & Poole, 1975).

For the purpose of this study, Prison environments are characterized by harsh conditions that significantly impact the psychological and emotional well-being of inmates. Despite efforts to improve correctional facilities, inmates whether awaiting trial or convicted often experience heightened levels of trauma, loneliness, and hopelessness, which undermine their ability to adjust to incarceration and reintegrate into society. Existing research primarily focuses on physical conditions within prisons, with limited attention to the psychological intricacies influencing inmate adjustment. This gap is particularly evident in Nigeria, where over 70% of inmates are awaiting trial under deplorable conditions, leading to poor mental health outcomes and maladaptive behaviors. Understanding the psychological factors that influence prison adjustment, including suicidal ideation, self-esteem, and trauma, is crucial for developing targeted interventions that foster rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. The following research questions were raised for the purpose of this research;

1. To find out if time spent in prison will have positive influence on prison adjustment of ATP and convicts
2. To analyze if ATP female inmates will significantly score higher on measure of prison adjustment than their counterparts that are convicts.
3. To observe if Suicidal ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness and trauma will jointly and independently predict prison adjustment among ATP.

Based on the reviewed literature and research questions, the following hypothesis will be tested;

1. Time spent in prison will significantly influence prison adjustment of awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) compared to convicted inmates.
2. ATP females will score significantly higher on prison adjustment than ATP males.
3. Suicidal ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness and trauma will jointly and independently influence adjustment of prisoners.

## METHODS

This study adopted a cross sectional research design because the prisoners cut across different status, cultures, tribe, sex, age categories. This is because the research design involves the study of a target population for a short period of time, usually with the use of surveys and questionnaires. The design affords the researcher to examine all the variables at a time. Questionnaires were used to collect data on the influence of suicidal ideation, of self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness and trauma on the overall prison adjustment of inmates in Kirikiri maximum security prison and women's prison Kirikiri Olodi Apapa, Lagos State.

The participants of this study were prison inmates in Kirikiri maximum security prison and inmates from Kirikiri women's prison, Kirikiri Olodi Apapa, Lagos State. A total number of 193 male and 85 female prison inmates, comprising of Awaiting Trial, convicted (condemned inmates, lifers obtained through Taro Yamen's sample size determination formula took part in the study.

The selected sampling technique for this study was purposive sampling. This is because the study requires potential participants to have characteristics which each person must possess before being part of the study.

The researcher used standardized questionnaires to collect data. The questionnaire was structured with several sections. A questionnaire with Six (6) sections were used for this study. They are as follows:

The overall prison adjustment scale, the overall prison adjustment scale consisted of 21 items, For the computation of the scale score, each respondent's item scores on the 21 items were summed. Thus, lower scores indicated better adjustment. The scale ranged from 0 to 76 with a mean of 43.8 (SD = 12.8). The 21 items in the overall adjustment scale can be found in Appendix. A pilot study was conducted on the overall adjustment scale on fifty (50) prison inmates which comprises of 25 male and 25 females in August, 2021.

The pilot study was aimed at determining the reliability of the test items, and also to know if prison inmates will find it easy to answer the items without any issue. The instrument had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86.

Suicidal Ideation Screening Questionnaire (SIS-Q; Cooper-Patrick, Crum & Ford, 1994) consists of four interviewer-administered questions that assess sleep disturbance, mood disturbance, guilt and hopelessness during the past year. These items were extracted from the depression and dysthymia sections of the Diagnostic Interview Schedule. A pilot study was conducted on the Suicidal Ideation Screening Questionnaire (SIS-Q; Cooper-Patrick, Crum & Ford, 1994) on fifty (50) prison inmates which comprises of 25 male and 25 females in August, 2021.

The pilot study was aimed at determining the reliability of the test items, and also to know if prison inmates will find it easy to answer the items without any issue. The instrument had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.89.

Rosenberg M. Self-esteem scale 10 items, developed by Morris Rosenberg, in 1965. The 10-item scale, which has been translated into over 28 languages assesses an individual's feelings of



self-worth when the individual compares himself or herself to other people. The scale is an attempt to achieve a one-dimensional measure of global self-esteem. It was designed to represent a continuum of self-worth, with statements that are endorsed by individuals with low self-esteem to statements that are endorsed only by persons with high self-esteem. The scale can also be modified to measure state self-esteem by asking the respondents to reflect on their current feelings. For its reliability coefficient, internal consistency for the RSE range from 0.77 to 0.88. Test-retest reliability for the RSE range from 0.82 to 0.85

Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS: Beck, 1978) was developed by Aaron T. Beck. The Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) is a 20-item scale for measuring negative attitudes about the future. Beck originally developed this scale in order to predict who would commit suicide and who would not. Pilot study also conducted among 50 inmates which comprises of 25 male and 25 female in August 2021. Becks hopelessness scale had a reliability coefficient with Cronbach's alpha of 0.84.

Loneliness scale developed by psychologist Daniel Russell (1996), (UCLA loneliness scale version3). Loneliness scale is a 20 –item measure that assesses how often a person feels disconnected from others. UCLA loneliness scale had a reliability coefficient with Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

As part of the procedure for this research, a letter of introduction was collected from the department of psychology, Lagos State University to obtain permission for the research from the Controller of Correctional Centre, Kirikiri Olodi Maximum Prison, Apapa Lagos State who gave verbal permission for the study to go on. Data was collected within three (3) weeks. This was because of the busy schedule of inmates due to different programs and limited free time for inmates at the same time. At the venue of the research, the researchers explained the purpose of the research and assured the inmates that their responses would be confidential and anonymous. Rapport was established between the researchers and the respondents (Prison inmates). The purpose of the study was explained and they were informed that absolute confidentiality is given to the responses and that their responses would not in any way be used against them. The researchers gave out the questionnaires to those respondents who indicated interest to participate. Attached to each questionnaire was an informed consent note for ethical consideration. On the note, it was clearly stated that participation in the study was voluntary, and that response to the questionnaires was to be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of research. Research assistants assisted during the administration of the questionnaires. The assistants were trained on how to administer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were collected after completion, data imputing was within another one week which started from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 till 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021. In order to observe ethical principles guiding research of this kind, respondents were debriefed adequately. This was achieved by appreciating their participation and reassuring them of confidentiality.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis one

- The hypothesis, which stated that Time spent in prison will significantly influence prison adjustment of awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) compared to convicted inmates, was tested using 4X2 Factorial ANOVA. The result is presented in the table below:

**Table 1: Number of prisoners who are high or low on time spent in prison and prison adjustment**

Time served	Prison status	Mean	Std. dev.	N
0-6 months	Convicted prisoner	53.8824	6.77202	17
	Total	53.8824	6.77202	17
7 months–1 year	Awaiting trial prisoner	46.6545	15.95621	55
	Convicted prisoner	51.2432	10.59194	37
	Total	48.5000	14.16271	92
1-5 years	Awaiting trial prisoner	49.8367	11.27931	49
	Convicted prisoner	48.0727	12.95413	55
	Total	48.9038	12.16754	104
6 years+	Awaiting trial prisoner	47.4615	9.41289	13
	Convicted prisoner	49.0000	13.95230	52
	Total	48.6923	13.11955	65
Total	Awaiting trial prisoner	48.0769	13.51446	117
	Convicted prisoner	49.7143	12.32854	161
	Total	49.0252	12.84268	278

**Table 2: Tests of between-subject effects**

Source	Type 3 sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	1006.178 <sup>a</sup>	6	167.696	1.017	.414
Intercept	421124.446	1	421124.446	2554.232	.000
Time served	319.190	3	106.397	.645	.587
Prison status	105.789	1	105.789	.642	.424
Time served * prison status	482.807	2	241.404	1.464	.233
Error	44680.646	271	164.873		
Total	713851.000	278			
Corrected total	45686.824	277			

The result in the table revealed that there are no significant differences between time spent in prison and prison status either convicted or awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) on prison adjustment among inmates ( $F(2,278) = 1.46; p > .05$ ). The stated hypothesis is thereby rejected.

**Table 3: One-way ANOVA showing influence of time spent in prison on prison adjustment.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	435.174	3	145.058	.878	.453
Within groups	45251.649	274	165.152		
Total	45686.824	277			

From the table it could be deduced that there was no significant influence of time spent in prison on prison adjustment. ( $F(3, 278) = .878; p > .05$ ). This in essence means that prisoners irrespective of their time spent in prison would not influence their adjustment to the prison environment. This runs contrary to the stated hypothesis; therefore, the stated hypothesis is thereby rejected.

### Hypothesis two

The hypothesis which stated that ATP Female inmates will score significantly higher on prison adjustment than their male counterparts was tested using t-test for independent means. The result is presented in the table below:

**Table 4: Summary table of independent t-test showing the influence of sex on prison adjustment among prisoners.**

	Sex	N	Mean	Std D.	df	t-value	Sig
Prison adjustment	Male	193	48.01	13.44	276	-1.99	<.05
	Female	85	51.33	11.09			

The result on the table showed that there was significant influence of sex on prison adjustment among prisoners ( $t(276) = -1.996, P < .05$ ). It could be further seen from the mean figure that female inmates score significantly higher on prison adjustment than their male counterparts. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is thereby confirmed.

### Hypothesis three

The hypothesis which stated that there will be significant joint and independent influence of suicide ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, trauma, on adjustment of prisoners was tested using multiple regression. The result is presented in the table below:

**Table 5:** Summary table of means showing the number of prisoners who are high or low on suicidal ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness and trauma on prison adjustment.

	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Prison adjustment	49.0252	12.84268	278
Suicide	10.2626	5.04630	278
Self-esteem	27.0360	4.11813	278
Loneliness	53.5036	15.50795	278
Hopelessness	47.8813	12.77564	278
Trauma	65.1331	52.74227	278

**Table 6:** Multiple regression showing joint and independent influence of suicide ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, trauma, on adjustment of prisoners

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	$\beta$	t	P
	.645	.428	.417	40.67	<.01			
Suicide						.041	.750	>.05
Self-esteem						.197	4.14	<.01
Loneliness						.403	7.00	<.01
Hopelessness						.315	5.21	<.01
Trauma						-.119	-2.27	<.05

From the table it can be deduced that there was significant joint influence joint influence of suicide ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, trauma, on adjustment of prisoners ( $R^2 = .428$ ;  $F = 40.68$ ;  $P < .01$ ). The predicted variables accounted for 42.8% variance on the dependent variable. It can be further revealed that self-esteem ( $t = 4.14$ ,  $\beta = .197$ ;  $P < .01$ ) loneliness ( $t = 7.004$ ,  $\beta = .403$ ;  $P < .01$ ), hopelessness ( $t = 5.212$ ,  $\beta = .315$ ;  $P < .01$ ) and trauma ( $t = -2.265$ ,  $\beta = -.119$ ;  $P > .05$ ) have significant independent influence on prison adjustment among prisoners but, suicide ( $t = .750$ ,  $\beta = .041$ ;  $P > .05$ ) did not have significant independent influence on prison adjustment. The stated hypothesis is thereby confirmed.

## DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis, which posited that time spent in prison would significantly influence the prison adjustment of awaiting trial prisoners (ATPs) compared to convicted inmates, was not confirmed. This suggests that the duration of incarceration does not substantially alter the ability of prisoners to adjust to the prison environment. Craig (2001) emphasized the adverse psycholog-

ical impacts of imprisonment, noting that the loss of basic privacy rights and autonomy over daily activities, such as choosing when to wake up, eat, or sleep, often results in diminished self-esteem and personal value. Prisoners are forced to endure cramped living conditions, deteriorating facilities, and limited control over their surroundings, which collectively create a dehumanizing experience that remains constant irrespective of the time spent in prison. This finding is further supported by the importation model, which asserts that pre-prison experiences and personal characteristics significantly shape how inmates adjust to prison life. Irwin and Cressey (1962) argued that individuals who enter prison with prior exposure to criminal values or specific behavioral traits may find it difficult to adapt to the prison environment, regardless of the length of their incarceration. These pre-existing factors, including socioeconomic background, criminal history, and attitudes toward authority, tend to play a more critical role in prison adjustment than the duration of imprisonment. Recent studies also align with this perspective. Wooldredge (2020) highlighted that environmental factors such as overcrowding, violence, and the lack of rehabilitative programs are more predictive of prison adjustment than the length of incarceration. Similarly, Gover et al. (2021) noted that the psychological toll of imprisonment is largely shaped by the conditions within the prison and the inmate's pre-incarceration experiences, rather than the mere passage of time. In essence, the findings indicate that time spent in prison does not significantly impact prisoners' adjustment. Instead, the challenges of prison life, combined with the psychological and behavioral patterns inmates bring with them, are the key determinants of adjustment. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms in prison conditions and the provision of rehabilitative programs rather than relying on the notion that inmates will naturally adjust over time.

The second hypothesis which stated that ATP female inmates will significantly score higher on prison adjustment than their male counterparts was accepted. The result showed that there was significant influence of sex on prison adjustment among prisoners. This in essence means that prison adjustment would differ between male and female prisoners. Much of the present research on prison adjustment focuses on men's adjustment to the prison setting (Cook 2018) with much less research that is solely focused on incarcerated women and their adjustment. Past research has theorized that this may be due to the belief that women adjust more easily to a prison environment or the idea that women typically have fewer violent disciplinary infractions while incarcerated, both ideas which are problematic for an accurate understanding of prison adjustment (Lindquist 1980; McClellan 1994). This was in support of the result of the present study as both men and women adjust to the prison environment with differences. Using a different approach, Van Tongeren and Klebe (2010) argue that adjustment is a multidimensional concept that is dynamic and unique to the individual based on a combination of pre-prison experiences and characteristics as well as interactions within the prison environment. To be sure, in a comparative study of male and female inmates and their disciplinary infractions Lindquist (1980) found that women differ from the prison population as a whole in that the sample reported higher rates of past incarceration as a juvenile and adult, and reported more institutional rule violations than men (albeit less serious),

calling into question the effects of their life-histories on adjustment. The use of the sole measure of disciplinary infractions, then, may result in an inaccurate picture of women's adjustment issues when other pre-prison experiences may be interacting with the prison environment and shaping their adjustment.

The third hypothesis tested for significant joint and independent influence of suicide ideation, self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, and trauma on the adjustment of prisoners and was confirmed. There was a significant joint influence of these factors on prisoner adjustment, accounting for 42.8% of the variance in adjustment. However, while self-esteem, loneliness, hopelessness, and trauma had significant independent effects, suicide ideation did not, partially confirming the hypothesis.

Research supports that loneliness and hopelessness have substantial impacts on prisoner adjustment. Tucker et al. (2019) found that many prisoners in North-West England struggled with relationships, while Brown and Day (2008) described incarceration as a time of broken relationships and challenging, further complicating adjustment. This study aligns with Diener (2009), Seligman, and Mihaly (2000), who argue that social relationships are critical to psychological well-being. Lack of connection can lead to loneliness, poor adjustment, and diminished well-being.

Hopelessness, as identified by Beck (1967), is a major risk factor for poor adjustment. Individuals with heightened hopelessness are more likely to struggle with adjustment. Although hopelessness is linked to suicide risk (Kuo et al., 2004), the present study found no significant independent effect of suicide ideation on prisoner adjustment, suggesting that cultural and religious beliefs may protect against suicidal behavior. The findings are consistent with reports indicating that suicide rates in African prisons are lower than in Europe (UNODC, 2014), possibly due to resilience fostered by social and economic conditions. The study concludes that while suicide ideation may predict poor adjustment, it is not a major independent factor in this context.

## CONCLUSION

Despite limitations such as a small sample size and limited literature, this study contributes to understanding how prisoners whether awaiting trial, or convicts adjust to the prison environment. Mass incarceration, poor infrastructure, lack of experienced staff, and long sentences remain concerns, but this research highlights that adjustment levels are similar across all prison statuses.

Recommendations were made that prison staffs should treat inmates with dignity and respect to improve their self-esteem and adjustment. Therapeutic sessions should be organized to assess and address mental health issues, especially suicidal thoughts. Prisons should focus on rehabilitation by introducing programs such as religious activities, seminars, vocational, and educational training to help inmates cope and prepare for life after release. The study encountered few limitations due to the fact that study was conducted in only one prison in Lagos, limiting its generalizability. The number of psychological variables studied was limited. Future research should ex-



plore additional factors such as personality traits, depression, optimism, social support, and religiosity to better understand prison adjustment.

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