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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Self-Esteem, Needs Satisfaction and Psychological Well-Being of Inmates at James Camp Prison in Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between the self-esteem, needs satisfaction and the psychological well-being of prisoners in Ghana. This study used the correlational survey design method to solicit information from prisoners in the James Camp Prison in Accra. The random sampling technique was used to select 155 male prisoners from an estimated population of 347. The findings revealed the following; a significant positive correlation exists between self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being among inmates. Results showed that there was a positive correlation between psychological wellbeing and self-esteem of inmates. Also, there was a significant positive relationship between needs satisfaction and psychological wellbeing. This study recommends that more psychosocial interventions should be provided to promote the mental health of inmates.

Keywords: Ghana, Inmates, Needs Satisfaction, Prison, Psychological Well-Being, Self-Esteem.

Introduction

Prisoners are faced with incidence of violence and are always concerned for their safety. Tosh (1982) quoting a long-term prisoner named Jack Abbott stated, "*everyone is afraid, it is not an emotional or psychological fear but it is a practical matter. If you don't threaten someone at the very least, someone will threaten you*" (p. 86). Though prisons aim to cure criminals of crime, their records and personal observations have not been encouraging. Instead, prisons do more harm than good. The pains of jail confinement affect all prisoners in different ways.

Tosh (1982) also noted that, prisoners need to endure the entry shock by adapting quickly to prison life. Prisoners are exposed to a new culture, which is very different from their own culture. Prisons in Ghana are classified based on their level of security, and on the activities undertaken at the various establishments. In the Central Prisons, trade training facilities are provided to equip prisoners with employable skills for their effective reintegration into society. They take custody of long-sentenced prisoners. Central Prisons are for all categories of prisoners,

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with the exception of condemned prisoners. Local Prisons are mainly for the safe custody and welfare of inmates. They usually take custody of short-sentenced prisoners. Open Camp Prisons undertake agricultural activities to provide food and train inmates in modern agricultural practices. Crime is still an ever-present occurrence in Ghana in spite of several efforts made by government and other agencies to clamp down on criminals and improve human and social security of Ghanaians. This is because, the country's prison facilities where criminality is expected to end have become revolving doors. Therefore, inmates are more likely return time and again. More than half of all inmates are likely to return to prison within six years of their release due to the level of degraded human conditions such as food, water, clothing, medicals and detergents (Adu, 2007).

This cycle of having inmates return after their release is partly due to issues regarding self-esteem. Self-esteem is crucial and is the cornerstone for a positive attitude towards living. It is very important because it affects how one thinks, acts and even how a person relates to other people (Maslow, 1987). Imprisonment can have adverse effects on prisoners' self-esteem. One of these effects is a diminished sense of self-worth and personal value. Prisoners typically are denied their basic privacy rights, and lose control over mundane aspects of their existence that most citizens have long taken for granted. They live in small, sometimes extremely cramped spaces and have little or no control over the identity of the person with whom they must share that space. They often have no choice over when they must get up or go to bed, when or what they may eat, amongst others. Thus, a diminished sense of self-worth and personal value may result. In extreme cases of institutionalization, prisoners may come to think of themselves as "the kind of person" who deserves only degradation and stigma to which they have been subjected while incarcerated (Craig, 2001).

In addition to issues regarding self-esteem, imprisonment is also likely to have other numerous effects on prisoners' psychological well-being. Historically, imprisonment was based on punishing those who wronged society, by inflicting suffering. In contrast to this concept, today's imprisonment is no longer simply intended as an acute form of corporal punishment, but a method of transformation through three distinct areas; punishment, deterrence, and rehabilitation (Krestev, Prokipidis, & Sycamniyas, 2005). However, a number of researchers concluded that imprisonment had negative psychological and physical effects on its inmates, leading to psychological deterioration (MacKenzie, & Mitchell, 2005; Yang et al., 2009).

In view of the above listed challenges faced by prisoners, a correlational study is vital to explore the associations between prisoners' self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being.

Method

Research Design

The research design used was correlational survey method. It was chosen because it will help to figure out how the variables (self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being) are connected to each other.

Target Population

The target population was all male prisoners with varied educational, economic, religious and social background of the James Camp Prison in Accra. The total population of the prisoners in the camp was 347.

Sampling Technique

The Epi Info version 3.5.1 was used to determine the sample size of the research.

Population Size	347
Expected Frequency	10%
Worst Acceptable Value	5%
Confidence Level	99%
Estimated Representative Sample	141

However, to make room for inappropriate completion and non-return of the questionnaire, 14 (more than 10 %) participants were added to round the figure up to 155. Based on this formula, a random sampling technique was used to choose one hundred and fifty-five prisoners. A basket containing folded papers with 'YES' and 'NO' written on them was presented to the participants.

Each member of the population was made to pick one of the folded papers. All those who picked 'YES' automatically became the subjects for the study.

Instrument / Material:

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: It includes 10 items that are scored by attaching a four-point response ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Scores are calculated as follows: For items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7: strongly agree = 3, agree = 2, disagree = 1, strongly disagree = 0. For items 3, 5, 8, 9, 10: strongly agree = 0, agree = 1, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 3. The scale has been shown to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha range from .77 to .88.

Basic Psychological Needs Scale: The scale has 21 items concerning the three needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. It has been shown to be reliable, with Cronbach alphas of about 0.75 (Deci, & Ryan, 1985). The basic psychological need satisfaction scale was scored by attaching a score of 1-4 to the likert scales of "not at all" to "untrue".

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale: The scale specifically focuses on measuring multiple facets of psychological well-being. These facets include: self-acceptance, the establishment of quality ties to others, a sense of autonomy in thought and action, the ability to manage complex environment to suit personal needs and values, the pursuit of meaningful goals and a sense of purpose in life and a continued growth and development as a person. A pilot study was conducted on thirty male prisoners to establish the reliability of the scale and a Cronbach's alpha estimated was .76. The Psychological Well-Being Scale was scored by attaching a score of 1-6 to the likert scales of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Ryff, 1989).

Procedure

Institutional approval was sought from the Acting Director of Prisons and after, the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the James Camp prisons was asked to allow entry in to the James Camp Prison. The questionnaires were administered to the 155 respondent-prisoners in the James Camp Prison. Those who could read and write were given 30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Participants who could not read the questions on the questionnaires were helped by reading and interpreting for them in their preferred Ghanaian language.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of data.

Results

As revealed in Table 1, a significant positive correlation exists between psychological well-being and self-esteem [$r = .433$], a significant positive correlation exists between psychological well-being and needs satisfaction [$r = .717$], and a significant positive correlation exists between self-esteem and needs satisfaction [$r = .591$]. The significant correlation between the three variables implies that a multiple regression analysis needs to be conducted to test the three hypotheses. Further, the two variables (self-esteem and needs satisfaction) explained 51.5 % variability in the psychological well-being [ODD Ratio = .515]. This is significant as indicated by the ANOVAs/F ratio [$F_{(2,152)} = 80.605, p = .000$].

Results from Standard Multiple Regression Analysis following analysis in Table 1 are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Correlation between Psychological Well-being, Self-Esteem and Needs Satisfaction

Prisoners (n=155)			
Variables	1	2	3
Psychological Well-being	-	.433*	.717*
Self-Esteem	-	-	.591*
Needs Satisfaction	-	-	-

Notes:

*significant at .05

1. Psychological Well-being

2. Self-Esteem

3. Needs Satisfaction

Table 2. Standard Multiple Regression Analysis on relationship between psychological well-being, self-esteem and needs satisfaction of prisoners

Prisoners (n=155)				
Variables	B	Beta	t	p
Psychological Well-being	11.331	-	2.411	.017
Self-Esteem	3.026	.214	3.198	.043
Needs Satisfaction	2.731	.709	10.127	.000

Results in Table 2, showed that a significant positive relationship exists between psychological well-being and self-esteem [$t = 3.198, p = .043$]. Results further indicate that self-esteem explained 21.4% changes/variability in psychological well-being [Beta = .214].

Result from this table further revealed a significant positive correlation between needs satisfaction and psychological well-being [$t = 10.127, p = .000$]. Needs satisfaction also explained 70.9 % changes/variability in psychological well-being [Beta = .709].

In addition, the correlation between self-esteem and needs satisfaction is positive and significant, [$r_{(153)} = .591, p = .000$].

Discussion

The study investigated the relationship between the self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being of prisoners. Findings from this study show a significant positive correlation between psychological well-being and self-esteem. An individual who exhibits mastery over all the aspect of psychological well-being (self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relationships, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery) will also possess a positive self-esteem (Ryff, 1996). Certainly Self-esteem is crucial and is seen as the cornerstone for a positive attitude towards living. Maslow (1979) established a link between self- esteem and psychological well-being. According to him, psychological health is not possible unless the essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved and respected by others and by him or herself. Those who have high self-esteem are presumed to be psychologically happy and healthy (Taylor, & Brown, 1988).

Having high self-esteem apparently provides benefits to those who possess it, they feel good about themselves, they are able to cope effectively with challenges and negative feedback, and they live in a social world in which they believe that people value and respect. Therefore, an individual

who possesses a high self-esteem is likely to exhibit a healthy psychological well-being hence the correlation positive between the two variables. Since our prisoners do not have good psychological well-being, it follows that they have low self-esteem. The study also identified a significant positive correlation between needs satisfaction and psychological well-being. The analysis further revealed that need satisfaction explained 70.9% changes/variability in psychological well-being. This finding is in line with the fact that these three psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and psychological relatedness) stimulate the self to initiate behaviour and promote psychological health and well-being of an individual. Therefore, when the satisfaction of these needs is thwarted the individual may not function well (Deci, & Ryan, 2002). There is lack of personal choice within the prison environment which may affect prisoners need for autonomy. Also, 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 (Tosh, 1982). All these factors according to Ryff (1996) have a bearing on one's psychological well-being hence the positive correlation between needs satisfaction and psychological well-being. This is the plight of the Ghanaian prisoner.

Bonet (1997) explained that nothing in the way we think, feel, decide and act escapes the influence of self-esteem. Thus, an individual who is able to fulfill all these needs will have a positive self-esteem. Looking at the prison environment and conditions in Ghana, it is unlikely that Ghanaian prisoners would enjoy sufficient needs satisfaction, high self-esteem and psychological well-being. The Ghanaian prisoner is likely to exhibit the following low self-esteem characteristics such as; having little faith in one's ability to achieve, becoming socially anxious and ineffective, viewing interpersonal relationships as threatening, feeling less positively toward others, lacking confidence in their own judgment and opinions and expect others to reject them (Johnson, 1996; Michener et al., 2004).

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being of prisoners. Results showed that positive correlation exists between self-esteem, needs satisfaction and psychological well-being. In all, the Ghanaian prisoner lacks needs satisfaction, inadequate psychological well-being and low self-esteem. The study recommends that counselling should be strengthened in our prisons to help reduce the psychological effects of imprisonment on inmates. By doing this, programmes which will best match offenders to their needs must be established. This may include; cognitive distortion restructuring, substance/drug-abuse treatment, anger management, decision making processes and techniques, behaviour modification, prison stress management, employable skills training and conflict resolution. In addition, prison officers must exhibit unconditional positive regard attitude to all manner of prisoners. This can help improve the prisoners' self-esteem, psychological well-being and their easy integration into society.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare the work has no conflicts of interest.

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