

The Impact of Psychoticism and Gender on Self-Disclosure of Criminal Tendencies in the Prison and Non-Prison Population

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Abstract: 127 prison volunteers (49 convicts, 78 awaiting trial persons) drawn from Enugu and Owerri prisons participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 16 to 60 years. Data were collected using the Psychoticism scale of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) and the Criminal Tendency Self-Disclosure Scale (CTSDS). Two hypotheses tested at 0.01 level guided the study. A cross-sectional research design and a two-way Analysis of Variance were used in the study. Findings showed that gender had a significant influence on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies only in the non-prison population: $F(1,123) = 7.86, p < 0.01$; there was no significant influence of gender in the prison population. Also, psychoticism was not significant in the study as well as the interaction of psychoticism and gender in the study. Findings were discussed with particular reference to the rehabilitation and reintegration of the prison inmates and the reformation of the prison system in Nigeria.

I. Introduction

A renowned psychiatrist, Thomas Szasz in his book 'The Myth of Mental Illness' conceptualized the technological society of today as being the world of 'madness'. This 'madness' is reflected in people's psyche in Nigeria, especially with regards to violation of social norm. This is worst regarding how Nigerians make their money and cherish money. This deterioration of our national psyche has led to escalating incidence of crime especially economic and financial crimes and other corrupt practices. The morbid psyche of Nigerians has blurred people's consciences and led to the perpetration of inhuman activities and terror in the country such as incessant suicide bombs and bomb explosions and other killings rocking the Nigerian nation on daily basis. The pre-and post 2011 election violence where thousands of innocent Nigerians, including National Youths Corpers were murdered in cold blood and the bomb blasts of the Boko Haram Islamic Sect that kill thousands of Nigerians daily are typical examples of a highly corrupt and criminally-tensed society that the consciences of its citizens have been blurred by the seeming 'madness'. These crimes and their perpetrators seem to have been sophisticated in their methods such that they circumvent every move directed at curbing them. This is however, a source of concern to well-meaning Nigerians and successive regimes in Nigeria. The National Assembly has tried to enact laws and establish agencies to curb these crimes, including the Conduct Bureau, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, and the Nigerian Prison Service, among others. These government agencies deal directly with crimes and their perpetrators on daily basis.

It seems that the sophisticated nature of crimes and their perpetrators may be linked to the human trait of psychoticism, which is a personality trait that relates to tough-mindedness and rebelliousness. Other synonyms for psychoticism include psychopathy, psychopathic deviate, and sociopathy. Ray and Ray (1982) indicated that psychopathy is not a continuous variable but rather an isolated clinical category with no 'normal' counterparts whereas Boeree (1998) indicates that psychoticism is the dimension of personality that separates those people who end up in institutions from the rest of humanity. The kinds of qualities found in high psychoticistic persons include certain recklessness, a disregard for common sense or conventions, and a degree of inappropriate emotional expression (Eysenck, 1990). He theorized that people with high level of psychoticism are egocentric, aggressive, impersonal, cold, lacking in empathy, impulsive, lacking in concern for others, and generally unconcerned about the rights and welfare of others. Those with low levels of psychoticism are empathic, unselfish, altruistic, warm, peaceful, pleasant, though they can be less socially decisive. Eysenck posited that criminality and antisocial behaviour are positively related to high levels of psychoticism, extraversion and neuroticism and that since males score much higher on psychoticism than females and are much more frequently found in jails, reform homes, and other institutions frequented by high psychoticism scores, then criminality might result from individual biological make up. He especially identified the male sex hormones (testosterone) and low cortical arousal as being responsible. He postulated that an individual's deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), the genetic structure underlying individual differences impacts "biological intermediaries" such as cortical arousal and as a result conditionability and conscience (Eysenck, 1996). Cortical arousal is a state in the brain that is marked by being alert and attentive. Low cortical arousal marked by poor

arousal and this causes individuals to act out in order to attain greater arousal and this may include criminal acts. On people's behaviour regarding crime and socially-desirable behaviours, Eysenck indicated that criminals know right from wrong, but prefer the wrong to the right and that the reasons some people commit crime and others do not is a matter of conscience (Eysenck, 1996). He posited that individuals learn behaviours through operant and classical conditioning. That is, the child who is punished repeatedly for an antisocial act and does not develop the appropriate response (i.e. fear of repeated punishment) will not learn from this punishment and correct behaviour in the future by developing a moral conscience. The potential of developing a moral conscience depends on some factors including whether conditioning experiences are missing, whether the wrong experiences are reinforced, and whether the person has low cortical arousal (Eysenck, 1996). Thus, the learning process, or the breakdown of this process, contributes to the likelihood of criminal behaviour and psychoticism is linked to low cortical arousal that influences conditionability, conscience, and ultimately behaviour (Winterdyk, 2000; Listwan, 2001; Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989).

Various empirical works have linked psychoticism with crime (Heaven, 1996; Daderman, 1996) and with delinquency (Powell & Steward, 1983). Psychoticism correlated highly with recidivism (McEwan, 1983) and psychoticism scale might usefully assist in the detecting antisocial disturbed children or in the selection of high-risk groups (Powell & Steward, 1983) and has validity in predicting future offending (Putnins, 1982). On the whole, psychoticism has been linked to high levels of criminality (Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989) and self-reported delinquency more than controls (Davison & Neale, 2001).

From the foregoing, the first aim of the study is to determine the role of psychoticism on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies between the prisoners and non-prisoners while the second is to examine the impact of psychoticism on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies within the prison population. The first hypothesis is that there will be no statistically significant difference between high and low psychoticism groups on self-disclosure of criminal tendency among the prisoners and non-prisoners while the second is that there will be no statistically significant difference between high and low psychoticism groups on self-disclosure of criminal tendency within the prison population.

Self-disclosure theory and research indicates that people engage in self-disclosure when they reveal intimate information about themselves to others. The discloser considers the information personal, and the choice of who to disclose to is fairly selective. It is the sharing information with others, information they would not normally know or discover (Allyn & Bacon, 1999). It covers all kinds of information: life experiences, personal circumstances, feelings, dreams, opinions and so on. Most importantly, self-disclosure entails telling the truth about one's reaction to others and the current situation. It involves risk and vulnerability on the part of the discloser. Rogers (1961) suggested that disclosing openly to another person in the context of a trusting relationship is an integral part of coming to understand oneself and thereby becoming more fully functioning.

Research has shown that self-disclosers are more self-content, more adaptive and competent, more perceptive, more extroverted, more trusting and positive towards others than non-disclosing persons. Overwhelming data from therapy, self-help groups, and research laboratories suggest that sharing our emotions improves our health, prevent disease, and lessens our psychological-interpersonal problems (Bales, 1997, Abiama, 2005). However, some people fail to or avoid self-disclosure for various reasons, such as fear rejection or criticism by other people, fear of intimacy, being ashamed of their thoughts and feelings, fear of losing respect, love or position by people around them, fear of incrimination. Some persons falsify information about them to appear socially desirable. It might interest us to know that most Nigerians in public sector employment 'fake' their chronological age to remain in service longer than necessary. They collude with their 'pals' at the Records in their offices to remove real birth certificates / sworn affidavits or age declaration and replace them with 'doctored'/fake ones to suit their acclaimed 'age' (Abiama & Ifeagwazi, 2006). This offence (perjury) is codified in section 117 of the Criminal Code (2004) and is punishable under section 118 of the Act by 14 years of imprisonment or life imprisonment as the case may be. Nigerians who engage in such illegal acts will definitely not self-disclose their criminal acts and may indeed go the extra miles to evade detection and/ or arrest and /or prosecution and /or conviction. Thus, self-disclosure of criminal tendencies may not be possible in Nigeria. However, this work is exempted from this assertion because it presents a crime scenario and asks respondents to indicate the extent to which they would self-disclose such information. Jourard (1971) posited that '...until we are open and transparent to others, we can never be open and transparent to ourselves'; hence, the need to self-disclose information about ourselves, including our criminal tendencies.

In respect of self-disclosure and gender, Jourard (1971) posited that different levels of intimate disclosure are appropriate for men and women and was critical of the non-expressive role of the men which requires man to 'appear tough, objective, striving, achieving, unsentimental, and emotionally unexpressive' (1971, p. 35). Studies have confirmed that females tend to disclose more intimately and to more people than males do (Taylor & Hinds, 1985; Snell, Miller, & Belk, 1988). Jourard and other researchers seem to suggest that men and women are seen as most well-adjusted and are liked the most when they disclose within the

appropriate societal roles for their gender. For men this usually means withholding information; for women, being open and disclosing, but only on those topics society deems appropriate for women to disclose.

Empirical findings on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in relation to gender have been interesting. Females tended to self-disclose criminal acts than the males (Fortin & Leduc, 2003) and the relationship of committing a crime was greater when the offender was female (Straus & Ramirez, 2003).

To this end, the third and fourth aims of this study are to investigate the role of gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies between the prison and non-prison population and to determine the influence of gender on self disclosure of criminal tendencies within the prison population. The third hypothesis is that there will be no statistically significant difference between males and females on self-disclosure of criminal tendency between the prison and non-prison population while the fourth hypothesis is that there will be no statistically significant difference between males and females on self-disclosure of criminal tendency within the prison population.

Literature has indicated that the most persistent 5% or 6% of offenders are responsible for 50% to 60% of known crimes (Farrington, Ohlin & Wilson, 1986; Lynam, 1998). These high-rate offenders emit personality characteristics (rebelliousness, aggression, impulsivity, and unconcerned for others) that best describe the traits of psychoticism. Just as children high in conduct disorder today may be the psychopaths and criminals of tomorrow (Davison & Neale, 2001), people that endorse high criminal tendency in a self-disclosure inventory may be the actual criminals of tomorrow because if placed in the crime-risk situations, they are most likely to commit the crime. Also, since literature has indicated that psychoticism is closely associated with crime, the tendency is that those who score high on the psychoticism scale may also score high on self-disclosure of criminal tendency. Finally, Listwan (2002) indicates that defensiveness about personality weakness is more pronounced in a criminal population than in the general population.

II. Method

Participants

The study was in 2005. It has 37 items arranged in a likert-style response format of 'don't know', 'would definitely not self-disclose', 'would probably not self-disclose', 'would probably self-disclose', and 'would definitely self-disclose'. All the items are scored positively (i.e., 1 to 5) except 6 items which are scored negatively (i.e., 5 to 1). Higher scores reflect greater tendency to self-disclose while lower scores depict lesser tendency to self-disclose. The cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale is 0.88 while its construct validity indexes range from 0.83 to 0.97. Examples of items in the scale are "If you violate an oath of office because you cannot keep it, you...." As a teacher if you lured and had sex with your student in exchange for grades, you...."

Procedure

The study started in Enugu prison and was completed in Owerri metropolis. After obtaining permission from the prison authority, the researcher contacted the cells and library warders and provosts of the various cells and informed them about the study and solicited their assistance. They went with the researcher to respective cells with sheets of paper and biro pens and inform the inmates about the study (filling forms for an officer) and solicited volunteers to put down their names. In the day of the study, the volunteers were called out per cell and assembled at the prison library for space and convenience. At the venue, the researcher explained the nature and essence of the study to the participants and requested them to fill the questionnaire honestly as their responses would not be used to incriminate them rather to help solve the problem of crime in the society. The researcher made clarification for questions that arose. Thereafter, the questionnaires and biro pens were distributed to them. There was no time limit for any participant. On completion, the researcher looked through to ensure thoroughness before collecting the questionnaire and biro pen from each participant. The study spanned one week for each prison to ensure thoroughness and at the end of it, the researcher appreciated the participants and the research assistants and left the prison with the stimulus materials for scoring and analysis.

For the non-prison population the questionnaires were given to them in their homes, offices and business premises. Participants were assured of confidentiality and encouraged to make their responses honestly. One week was used for the study in each town. The researcher and his assistant ensured thoroughness before collecting the questionnaires from participants. At the end of it all, the researcher appreciated the participants and research assistants and took the instrument for scoring and analysis.

Design/ Statistic

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in the study while a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for unequal sample sizes and a follow up F-test was used for data analysis.

Results

Analysis of the mean scores of the prison and non-prison population shows that high psychoticism group had a sum of 210.16, comprising 106.60 for males and 103.56 for females while low psychoticism group had a sum of 217.73, comprising 112.84 for males and 104.89 for females. The sum for males was 210.44 while the sum for females was 208.45. The total sum was 427.90.

Table 1: Summary Table Of Psychoticism × Gender On Self-Disclosure Of Criminal Tendency Between Prisoners And Non-Prisoners

SOV	SS	DF	MS	F
A (PSYCHOTICISM)	903.41	1	903.41	2.31 NS*
B (GENDER)	1774.04	1	1774.04	4.53
A*B (INTERACTION)	383.11	1	0383.59	0.53 N*
S/AB (ERROR)	103772.4	265	391.59	
TOTAL	106832.96	268		

* Not significant.

From table 1, there was a significant influence of gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendency between the prison and non-prison population as the obtained F-value of 4.53 exceeded the critical F-value of 3.92 at $p < 0.01$, $df = 1, 123$. However, there was no significant influence of psychoticism and the interaction of psychoticism and gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendency between the prison and non-prison population.

Analysis of the mean scores of the prison shows that high psychoticism group had a sum of 214.67, comprising 110.45 for males and 104.22 for females while low psychoticism group had a sum of 223.32, comprising 113.88 for males and 109.44 for females. The sum for males was 224.33 while the sum for females was 213.66. The total sum was 437.90.

Table 2: Summary Table For Psychoticism (A) × Gender (B) On Self-Disclosure Of Criminal Tendency Among The Prison Population

SOV	SS	DF	MS	F	SIGNIFICANCE
A (PSYCHOTICISM)	385.25	1	385.25	1.04	NS*
B (GENDER)	665.00	1	665.00	1.79	N*
A × B (INTERACTION)	17.26	1	17.26	0.05	NS*
S/AB (ERROR)	45696.85	123	45696.85		
TOTAL		126			

From table 2, there was no significant influence of psychoticism and gender as well as the interaction of psychoticism and gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendency in the prison population. Their F-values were less than the table value of 3.92.

III. Discussion

The first finding showed that psychoticism does not exert a significant role on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies between the prison and non-prison population. This finding contradicts the findings of Ray and Ray (1982) which indicated that psychopathy is not a continuous variable but an isolated clinical category with no ‘normal counterpart and that of Boeree (1998) who found that psychoticism is the dimension of personality that separates those who end up in institutions from the rest of humanity.

The second finding indicates that psychoticism does not exert a significant impact on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the prison population. This finding may not be unconnected with the appalling condition in the prison which affects the mental health of the inmates negatively.

The third finding indicates that gender exerts a significant influence on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies between the prison and non-prison population. An observation of the mean scores indicates that males self-disclosed their criminal tendencies more than females. This finding is contrary to previous findings (Fortin and Leduc, 2003; Straus & Ramirez, 2003) who found that females self-disclosed criminal acts more than the males. However, this finding indicates that factors outside the prison accounted for the significance of gender in the study.

The fourth finding indicates that gender does not exert a significant impact on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the prison population. An incidental finding indicated the non-significant interaction of psychoticism and gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the entire study.

The findings of this study have implication in our criminal justice system and society. Regarding the non-significance of psychoticism on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the prison population and non-prison population, it seems reasonable to say that the Nigerian society (prison and non-prison) has a significant number of high and low psychoticistic persons. While the low psychoticistic persons may self-disclose information, the high psychoticistic persons may be cautious as not to give themselves away. Such persons are

usually very smart in evading security agents and any instrument that could betray them. Such participants could have viewed the research instrument as one of such crime detective devices and so feigned low psychoticism and low self-disclosure. With regards to the prison population, the non-significance of psychoticism on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies may probably be due to the duration of stay in the prison. Some participants stayed for periods ranging from 3 months to 11 years, with a mean of 2.3 years. It seems that long stay in the prison could have impacted the inmates' consciences such that they became more hardened, carefree, unremorseful, and hopeless, thereby bridging the gap between high and low psychoticistic persons. This calls for a critical appraisal of our criminal justice system especially regarding delay in trial and verdict. There is no justification for an inmate to be remanded in custody longer than the time he or she could have finished serving a jail term. A judicial panel should be constituted to review such cases periodically (Abiama & Etowa, 2011).

With regards to the significance of gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the prison and non-prison population, an examination of the mean scores reveals that males self-disclose higher than females. Even though the prison institution is frequented mostly by males, it seems that females there are more hardened than males. They failed to self-disclose their criminal tendencies to appear socially desirable. This may be in line with the societal erroneous presumption that females hardly commit crime and so crime investigative machinery and the court are usually more lenient to female suspects, perhaps because of their feminine nature. It is on rare cases that females are convicted of crime and jailed. Even while in prison, they are given more privileges than males. The criminal justice system has to adopt a new orientation and treat all suspects and inmates equally.

With regards to the non-significance of gender on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies in the prison population, the implication is that criminal tendency is a trait that cuts across all gender and not a male affair. Males and females in the prison do not differ on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies. This may not be unconnected with the deplorable nature of the prison environment that reduces the psyche of inmates and make them to think, act and respond alike. The prison condition should be improved to conform to international standard and also to reflect the huge resources committed to it since the inception of current democratic regime in 1999. The searchlight for crime reduction should be channeled to both genders in the general population as most female criminals tend to be insulated from hunting, arrest, prosecution, trial and/ or conviction.

IV. Recommendations

The findings of this study have far-reaching implications and the following are recommended: Since psychoticism is related to crime and it has been shown to exist in the prison and general population, effort towards screening job and public office seekers for psychoticism should be commenced. Those shown to be high on psychoticism should not be given jobs or offices that will expose them to crime but rather on ones that will inhibit their criminal tendencies (Abiama, 2007). Such persons should be helped to re-channel their arousing energies to productive ventures.

Furthermore, Nigeria operates the adversarial system that presumes an accused person innocent until the contrary is proved. There is a danger of non-disclosure of information needed for the system to progress, especially privilege information. Accordingly, psychologists and other mental health experts need to work on the psyche of Nigerians through vigorous attitudinal and ethical re-orientation. This could be done by ensuring that psychological tests that detect lies are enshrined in screening protocol for any employment or public office in the country. Persons that fail to self-disclose truthfully should be screened out in such exercises and persons that self-disclose truthfully should be appointed. This may make Nigerians to start telling the truth instead of projecting their social masks.

Furthermore, since this study has indicated that criminal tendencies and their self-disclosures are applicable to both genders, both males and females should be equally hunted, apprehended, charged, and convicted for criminal offenses. This may help to reduce the number of criminals in the general population. The females should not be shielded from arrest or charge or trial or conviction. The hither-to erroneous presumption absolving females from crime and making some of them to be safe haven for criminals should be jettisoned. The tentacles for crime prevention and control should be extended to cover males, females and juveniles.

Lastly, the Nigerian government and society should undertake a thorough overhaul on crime detection and control mechanism. The recruitment process for security agents and workers in financial institutions has to change. Why should armed robbers know that a bank customer is withdrawing a huge sum of money and trail the person and eventually kill and /or collect the money without information from the bank and lapses in the security network? This has been happening for years and the criminals in the financial and security system have remained immune from detection and punishment. Definitely, the digitization of the era should be able to flush the bad eggs out of the system.

V. Conclusion

It is evident from the results of this study that psychoticism and gender play some roles on self-disclosure of criminal tendencies. It can be concluded that psychoticism and gender are critical variables in predicting criminal tendencies in Nigeria.

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