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EMOTION REGULATION, COPING STRATEGIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG INMATES OF CORRECTIONAL CENTERS IN BENUE NORTH-WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being of individuals particularly those in high-stress environments such as correctional facilities have in recent times becomes a course of concern. This study investigated the influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey. Two hundred and fifty-one (251) inmates whose ages ranged from 27 to 49 years with a mean age of 37.849 years (SD=6.201) were sampled using proportionate sampling technique. Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, The Brief COPE and Psychological Well-being Scale were used for data collection. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Standard Multiple Regression Analysis. The result of hypothesis one revealed a significant influence of emotion regulation on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West. The result of hypothesis two revealed a significant influence of coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates. Also, hypothesis three revealed a significant joint influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West. It was concluded that, emotion regulation and coping strategies are independent and joint influencers of psychological well-being among inmates. The study recommended among others that clinical psychologists should design and implement integrated intervention programmes that simultaneously address both emotion regulation and coping skills, ensuring that inmates can effectively manage stress and regulate their emotions.

Key Words: Emotion Regulation, Coping Strategies, Psychological Well-Being, Inmates

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Background

In recent times, researchers in the field of social sciences have increased interest in the aspects of psychological well-being. Extensive research on psychological well-being focuses mainly on how people feel (e.g., positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction (Harney et al., 2014), and begun to be complemented by a heightened interest in how well inmates perceive aspects of their functioning. This entails the extent to which they feel they are in control of their lives, feel that what they do is meaningful and worthwhile, and have good relationships with others. This perspective is often referred to as psychological well-being and is based on a eudemonic perspective, rather than the hedonic perspective of subjective Well-being research. This has led to scientific literature taking an approach to the construct from two polarized perspectives. Firstly, it is construed from a hedonic perspective, the result of an internal state that the individual experiences on a subjective temporal plane, associated with high levels of positive affect and life satisfaction (Weiss et al., 2016; Opree et al., 2018).

Consequently, it focuses on subjective experiences of Well-being specifically relating to happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect (Henn et al., 2016). In contrast, the second perspective of psychological Well-being is construed from a eudemonic perspective as a process of self-realization through which individuals evolve over time. Subsequently, it is not associated with results but with capacities (Berzonsky & Cieciuch, 2016; Disabato et al., 2016; Urquijo et al., 2016).In line with the second perspective, Ryff (2018; 2019) designed a series of indicators based on the theory of positive human functioning that are consistent with a eudemonic perspective on happiness.

Rehabilitation efforts now place a stronger emphasis on mental health interventions and skill development programmes aimed at improving inmates' psychological Well-being and reducing recidivism (Mears et al., 2019). Moreover, recent studies indicate that the correctional environment can exacerbate mental health issues, especially if inmates do not receive adequate psychological care. Programmes focusing on mental health support, vocational training, and social reintegration have become vital in reshaping incarceration's psychological impact (Haney, 2020). These programmes not only help manage behavioral issues in the facility but also improve post-release outcomes, aligning with the broader rehabilitative goals of the correctional system (Cohen & Whetstone, 2021).

Nigeria as a country continues to face severe challenges regarding the psychological health and Well-being of its inmates. The correctional psychiatric services are significantly under-resourced, with insufficient access to mental health professionals and treatment. This scarcity is reflective of the broader mental health crisis in Nigeria, where only about 10% of those who need mental health services can access them, and mental health care is predominantly urban-based. Many inmates in Nigerian correctional facilities suffer from untreated mental health disorders, exacerbated by poor conditions and a punitive approach to incarceration rather than rehabilitation. Studies suggest that there is a stark absence of equivalence in care between inmates and the general population, with correctional environments significantly undermining access to proper mental health treatment (Amnesty International, 2023). Many factors have been linked to the study of psychological well-being among inmates. However, this study dwelled on emotion regulation and coping strategies.

Emotion regulation is a term commonly used to define an inmate’s capability to efficiently manage and reply to an emotion experience across time and situations (Scheibe et al., 2015). It influences inmates to take a socially unacceptable or dangerous course of action, or they may cause a significant interpersonal bond to be broken (Verzeletti et al., 2016). It

includes changes in emotion responding such as increasing, maintaining, or decreasing of positive and negative emotions. These changes may occur on three dimensions: the type of inmates' emotions, the timing of experiencing emotions, and how inmates experience and express these emotions (Gross, 2015; Tamir, 2016). Emotion regulation includes four important components: awareness and understanding emotions, acceptance of emotions, ability to control impulsive behaviors and act according to the set objectives despite experiencing negative emotion, have ability to flexibility (depending on the situation and personal objectives) and select strategies of emotion regulation (Martin & Ochsner, 2016; Young et al., 2019).

Emotions are a common part of everyday life and it is believed to promote worthwhile achievement, enables interpersonal engagement, and directs actions to improve well-being, but it is not always functionally adaptive. Trying to regulate emotions is always a voluntary act, but it is important to respond appropriately to environmental stresses (Kantana et al., 2019). When inmates feel that their emotions are inappropriate for a given situation, they generally attempt to regulate them (Gross, 2014). In this respect, there is an important difference between emotions as they are felt or experienced and emotions as they are processed and modified.

One method of regulating emotion is by strategically selecting or avoiding specific environments (situation selection), a proactive approach to managing emotions (Rodriguez &Kross, 2023). For instance, inmates may seek out or avoid particular social situations to increase the likelihood of experiencing desired emotions and reduce exposure to emotionly distressing circumstances. This aligns with Gross's (2015) work on emotion regulation strategies, which emphasized situation selection as an effective way to preempt emotion difficulties. In addition, individuals may try to modify their physical environment (situation modification) to manage emotions. This could include adjusting lighting to create a calming atmosphere or using music to energize the environment (Sheppes et al., 2023). However, in cases where modifying the environment is not possible, such as in correctional facilities, attentional deployment becomes a key strategy. Inmates may need to focus their attention on specific aspects of their experience to manage emotions effectively (Vuillier et al., 2023). This method, which Gross (2015) referred to as attentional deployment, involves consciously shifting one's focus to avoid emotion triggers or concentrate on more neutral or positive aspects of a fixed situation.

The combination of these strategies-situation selection, modification, and attentional deployment-provides a nuanced framework for understanding how inmates, even in constrained environments like correctional centers, can regulate their emotions (Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Gross & Thompson, 2015). An antecedent strategy for managing emotions involves cognitive reappraisal, where individuals alter their interpretation of a situation to change its emotion impact. For instance, if an inmate perceives a slight from a correctional officer, this can be reappraised as a sign that the officer was simply preoccupied or distracted at that moment. This cognitive reframing helps to reduce the emotion intensity of the experience by providing a more benign interpretation (Gross, 2019). In contrast, response modulation strategies focus on altering the emotion experience after it has occurred. These methods include managing physiological, experiential, or behavioral expressions of emotion. Techniques such as physical exercise, adequate sleep, relaxation practices, and mindful eating can help modulate emotion responses (Gross & Thompson, 2021). Such approaches aim to directly influence how emotions are expressed and managed, offering immediate relief and helping maintain emotion stability.

Another crucial factor related to the psychological well-being of inmates is their use of coping strategies. Research consistently indicates that the use of effective coping strategies can reduce psychological distress and enhance well-being. For example, recent studies have demonstrated that coping styles play a significant role in the mental health outcomes of incarcerated inmates (Jones & Schmidt, 2016). Gullone et al. (2009) found that inmates often experience compromised psychological Well-being and that the coping styles they adopt can significantly affect their mental health outcomes. Similarly, more recent research by Williams et al. (2018) identified a strong positive correlation between the use of adaptive coping strategies and improvements in both psychological and physical Well-being among inmates.

General affective states such as optimism have also been linked to better health outcomes. Inmates who report negative emotions, such as regret, anxiety, and sadness, tend to experience more psychological and physical complaints (Peterson & Holley, 2017). Importantly, studies emphasize that, inmates who engage in active emotion-focused coping strategies, such as processing and expressing their emotions, tend to experience better health outcomes compared to those who suppress their negative emotions (Thompson et al., 2020). Active coping strategies appear to foster resilience and improve overall well-being within the correctional environment.

Coping efforts can result in various health-related outcomes. Successful coping is associated with a better quality of life, while ineffective coping often leads to physical and psychosocial disturbances (Shuker & Newton, 2020). Long-term well-being is often contingent on employing the most adaptive coping strategies, particularly in high-stress environments like correctional facilities (Williams et al., 2018).More so, in recent decades, researchers have initiated researches focusing on psychological well-being. This may be as a result of its influence on inmates' disposition and behaviour or because of its significant influence on the society at large but it was observed that inadequate studies have been carried out to examine the psychological well-being of correctional inmates and its influencing factors including emotion regulation and coping strategies which necessitate the study.

Emotion Regulation and Psychological Well-being

In a quest to find out the influence ofemotion regulation on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers, Granados et al. (2023) investigated the effectiveness of a programmes for the development of socio-emotion competences in people admitted to a penitentiary center. The objective was to equip inmates with social competences in emotion regulation strategies that would be useful to them in the penitentiary center and, at the same time, facilitate their future social inclusion. The experimental group consisted of 29 inmates, with 21 forming the control group. The pretest-posttest ANOVAs showed that the programmes led to a significant increase in: (i) positive social behaviors; (ii) emotion competences; (iii) self-esteem. Positive correlations were also observed between the three variables. The resultssuggest the importance of implementing programmes for the promotion of thesocio-emotion development of people incarcerated in penitentiary centers.

Ifeagwazi et al. (2020) investigated emotion regulation dispositional mindfulness and duration of stay as factors in somatic symptoms among inmates in South-Eastern Correctional Center. Participants were 209 inmates drawn from a correctional center in Eastern Nigeria, who completed measures of emotion regulation (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), mindfulness and somatization. Results of a hierarchical multiple regression indicated that cognitive reappraisal predicted somatic complaints but it was only among older inmates, while expressive suppression was not a significant predictor of somatic complaints. Dispositional mindfulness was a negative predictor of somatic complaints among younger

and older inmates. Duration of stay in correctional center positively predicted somatic complaints among inmates in emerging adulthood only (younger inmates), but not among older inmates. Frequent use of cognitive reappraisal strategy of emotion regulation by inmates may not always be productive in reducing somatic complaints, and the length of time in the facility may influence somatic symptoms especially for younger inmates.

Chiclana et al. (2019) investigated mental health, positive emotions and Well-being in Correctional Center: A comparative study between young and older inmates. The study sampled 182 young and elderly inmates of the Madrid III Correctional center. The investigation was carried out with a battery of self-report psychological questionnaires and objective measurements obtained through the facility files. The analysis shows that there are no significant differences in Well-being between young and elderly inmates. However, young people have higher levels of psychological distress, more presence of negative emotions and have a more maladjusted behaviour in correctional center (they consume more cannabis and have more disciplinary records). Older people better regulate their emotions, adopt better the perspectives of others, showing themselves to be friendlier. The result concluded that elderly inmates in correctional center, compared with the youngest, have a better psychological adjustment, more internal resources and a better adaptation to the correctional environment despite of no differences in related variables such as time in the facility.

Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-being

Abrifor et al. (2023) examined inmate's coping strategies andadjustment mechanisms in the Kuje Correctional Facility. The study adopted mixed research methods,data were sourced through primary and secondary sources. The sample size was determinedthrough Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size. The hypothesis tested with correlation analysis shows that at 5% level of significant with test results of, r= (- .0474). There is no significant relationshipbetween gender, age, level of education and inmates` coping with correctional service. However,the study recommends counseling by psychologists and other psychological care givers should beemployed in correctional service. The correctional service officials should also assist inmates tolearn and apply appropriate strategies for coping with their challenges but also to assist in theachievement of correctional reformatory goal. The study will be significant to individuals, Nigeria Correctional Services, Non-governmental organizations and researchers in social sciences.

Muring'u et al. (2021) conducted a study aimed at investigating the influence of physiological stress coping strategies on the psychological Well-being of 395 life-sentenced inmates in maximum-security correctional center in Kenya. The study collected data using questionnaires for life-sentenced inmates, an adapted psychological Well-being scale for life-sentenced inmates and interviews for specialized correctional officers. Data was analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study indicate that physiological stress coping strategies influence the psychological Well-being of life-sentenced inmates. The study concluded that correctional facilities are intended to serve diverse purposes, which include keeping the imprisoned persons in safe custody, deterrence, rehabilitation and behaviour modification. The lifers' physiological activities that include; sleep, diet, exercises, relaxation, reading, listening to music, watching television, games, and recreation have an influence on their psychological Well-being. The study recommends that; policymakers and stakeholders of correctional and rehabilitation of inmates prioritize the psychological Well-being of lifers and enhance physiological stress coping strategies for the psychological Well-being of lifers and effective rehabilitation and reintegration of the inmates.

Bisri et al. (2020) conducted a study aimed at investigating (i) the emotion-focused coping strategies used by the new inmates in the Class IIA Female Correctional Facility of Malang City, (ii) understand the illustration of new inmates' adjustment, (iii) find out whether emotion-focused coping is a predictor of new inmates' adjustment. This study employs predictive-quantitative research with descriptive analysis and applies simple linear regression on the population of new inmates at the Class IIA Female Correctional Facility of Malang City. The study uses the one-shot tryout technique. The subjects were selected using a saturated sample of 118 respondents. This study resulted in an accepted hypothesis with a significance value of 0.014, an R-value of 0.336, and an R square value of 0.181, which indicated that emotion-focusedcoping contributed to the emergence of self-adjustment by 18.1%. The use of emotion-focused coping can be used to develop self-adjustment for inmates in correctionalenvironments, in addition to the emotion-focused coping that successfully applied canincrease the self-esteem and capacity of inmates to overcome their problems in thefuture.

Emotion Regulation, Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-being

Tanveer et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between Emotional Dysregulation, Coping Strategies and Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms in adolescents living at Line of Control (LOC). A cross-sectional research design was used. The sample of 400 adolescent participants was drawnfrom different private and government schools by using convenient random sampling. Results of the study revealed that Emotional Dysregulation and Emotion Focused Coping had a positive and highlysignificant relationship with Post-traumatic stress symptoms. It was also revealed that Emotional Dysregulation and Emotion FocusedCoping positively predicted Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms. Implications of the study and a few limitations have been discussed. It was concludedthat findings of this study will help in regulating adolescents' psychological well-being by helping future researchers in not only understanding the coping strategies these children are employing at the moment but also developing and enhancing inthem the healthy coping styles which they are currently not using. Furthermore, the unique nature of non-combatant civilian traumaremains to be understood from several other perspectives, to which this research was only a foundation stone.

Middlehurst (2019) investigated the relationship between the predictor variables of emotion regulation and coping skills on the criterion variable of psychological wellbeing (depression, anxiety, and stress). Seventy-three undergraduate students were recruited through opportunity sampling. Result that only avoidance coping skills were correlated with DASS depression, DASS anxiety, and DASS stress. Based on these findings, recommendations were discussed for future interventions to be implemented throughout higher education institutes. Interventions incorporating teachings of healthy coping styles and how to regulate one's emotions would have the most beneficial influence on student's psychological well-being.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

i. Emotion regulation will significantly influence psychological Well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria.
ii. Coping strategies will significantly influence psychological Well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria.

iii. Emotion regulation and coping strategies will jointly influence psychological Well-being significantly among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to investigate emotion regulation, coping strategies and psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design is a type of design that does not manipulate variables but makes it easier for data to be collected across many samples at a given point in time. This type of design was adopted because the researcher assessed samples of inmates using questionnaire, thereafter made inferences that were generalized to inmate population. Emotion regulation and coping strategies were independent variables while the dependent variable was psychological well-being.

Population

The population of inmates in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria was 727 as of October 2024. This study comprised of inmates of correctional centers in Gboko and Makurdi correctional centers. (Nigerian Correctional Service Benue State Command Headquarters Makurdi, 2024)

3.3.1 Sample Size Determination

The sample for this study was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample determination formula. The formula is illustrated below;

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1-p)}{d^2(N-1)+X^2P(1-P)}$$

Where;

S= required sample size

X = value (i.e. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

N = population size

P = population proportion (expressed as a decimal)

d = degree of accuracy assigned to be 0.5 i.e. (5% expressed as a proportion of the margin of error)

therefore, the working is shown below;

$$= \frac{1.96^2 \text{ x } 727 \text{ x } 0.5\ (1-0.5)}{0.05^2(727-1) + 1.96^2 \text{ x } 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

$$= \frac{3.84 \text{ x } 727 \text{ x } 0.25}{0.0025 \text{ x } 726 + 3.84 \text{ x } 0.25}$$

$$= \frac{697.9}{1.82 + 0.96}$$

$$= \frac{697.9}{2.78}$$

= 251

Therefore, based on the sample size determination formula, a sample of 251 inmates were used for the study.

Sampling Technique

This study employed the use of proportionate sampling where the inmates from the correctional centers were drawn for the study in the proportion of their original populations. In each correctional center, inmates were drawn randomly to form the sample for the study. The proportionate distribution of the sample drawn is shown below where the population of each correctional center is divided by the total population and multiplied by the expected sample:

Makurdi Correctional Center $\frac{580}{727}x\frac{251}{1} = 200.23 \approx 200$

Gboko Correctional Center $\frac{147}{727}x\frac{251}{1} = 50.75 \approx 51$

Therefore, 251 inmates were drawn for the study.

Participants

The participants for the study were 251 inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial District, Nigeria. The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that their ages ranged from 27 to 49 years with a mean age of 37.849 with a mean age of 37.849 years (SD=6.201). Results further indicated that 196(78.1%) were male inmates while 55(21.9%) were females. Furthermore, the result revealed that 91(36.3%) were single, 139 (55.4%) were married, 9(3.6%) were separated while 12(4.7%) were widowed. Also, the result for inmates' religious affiliation showed that 152 (60.6%) indicated they were Christians by faith, 71(28.3%) indicated they were Muslims while 28(11.2%) indicated they were traditional worshipers. The result further revealed that 122(48.6%) indicated their occupation as farming, 24(9.6%) were civil servants, 27(10.8%) were traders while 78(31.1%) were artisans. Furthermore, the results showed that 200(79.7%) inmates were from Makurdi correctional facility while 51(20.3%) were from Gboko correctional facility. Also, 100(39.8%) inmates indicated they had stayed under incarceration between 1-5 years, 123(49%) had stayed between 6-10 years, 22(8.8%) had stayed between 11-15 years while 6(2.4%) had stayed between 16 years and above. Finally, the result for category of inmates showed that 111(44.2%) were awaiting trial while 140(55.8%) were convicted of various criminal offenses.

Instruments

i. **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ-10):** The emotion regulation questionnaire is a 10-item self-report questionnaire developed by Gross and John (2003) based on Gross (1998) process model of emotion regulation. The ERQ was designed to measure people's usage of two regulation strategies: an antecedent-focused strategy called cognitive reappraisal (6 items, e.g., "When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm") where a person attempts to change how he or she thinks about a situation in order to change its emotion impact, and a response-focused strategy called expressive suppression (4 items, e.g., "I keep my emotions to myself") where a person attempts to inhibit the behavioural expression of his or her emotions (Gross & John, 2003). Separate scale scores are derived for these two regulation strategies. All items are answered on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating higher usage of that strategy. Both ERQ scale scores have frequently demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > .70$) across a range of sample types and cultures.

ii. **The Brief-COPE:** The Brief COPE abbreviated version of the 60-item Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE) Inventory was developed by Carver (1997). The instrument was used to assess situational coping strategies (ways inmates cope with a specific stressful event) and dispositional coping strategies (usual ways inmates cope with stress in everyday life) among inmates The scale measures 14 coping subscales with two items each, which are as follows: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, emotion support, instrumental support, behavioral disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. For each item, respondents indicate whether they use the coping response on a four-point Likert scale (1 = I usually don't do this at all; 2 = I usually do this a little bit; 3 = I usually do this a medium amount; 4 = I usually do this a lot). Cronbach's alpha of original subscales ranged from .50 (venting) to .90 (substance use).

iii. Psychological well-being Scale: The 18-item version of Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) is a self-report instrument that comprises 18 items measuring six dimensions of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relations with others, and purpose in life. The items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Therefore, the total score is in the range of 18–108, with higher scores representing greater well-being.

Pilot Study

The instrumentsused in this study were tested in a pilot study using 50 inmates from Otukpo Correctional Center who were between the age range of 28-51 years with a mean score of 39.70 (SD=7.138). The result of the sex of respondents revealed that 39 (78%) were male inmates while 11(22%) were female inmates. In terms of their religion, 31 (62%) were Christians, 14 (28%) were Muslims while 5 (10%) were practicing traditional religion. Among them, 9 (18%) were single, 29 (58%) were married, 11 (22%) were separated and 1 (2%) was widowed. Still among them, 26 (52%) were incarcerated within 1-5years, 20 (40%) were incarcerated for 6-10 years while 4 (8%)were incarcerated for over 15 years.

As for the psychometric properties of theinstruments, the Emotion Regulation Scale had an overall reliability coefficient of .97. The item total correlation for the 10-item scale ranged from .966 to .971 corresponding to items 1 and 10 respectively. Since the scores are above .30 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), this indicated that the scale is fit for use in the main study. The Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced Scale (Brief-COPE) had a reliability coefficient of .75. The item total correlation for the 28-item scale ranged from .476 to .685 corresponding to items 1 and 28 respectively. Since the scores are above .30 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), this indicated that the scale is fit for use in the main study.

The Psychological well-being Scale had a reliability coefficient of .858. The item total correlation for the 18-item scale ranged from .841 to .859 corresponding to items 1 and 18 respectively. Since the scores are above .30 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), this indicated that the scale is fit for use in the main study.

Procedure

This study was conducted among inmates of correctional centers in Makurdi and Gboko. The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head, Department of Psychology and the letter was presented to the Comptroller General of Correctional Centre in-charge of Benue State to obtain approval to collect data on inmates. Thereafter, the consent of the inmateswas sought before the administration of questionnaire was carried out. All

ethical considerations were taken into consideration during the data collection process. A research assistant was adopted and given proper orientation on research ethics and procedures to support data collection process. Proportionate sampling was used to draw the sample for the study, the drawn sample was then given the questionnaire copies with instructions on how to respond. The respondents were given the maximum of 45 minutes each to complete providing responses to the questionnaire. After administration, all the copies retrieved from the respondents were considered for statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Data for this study was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher used descriptive statistics including frequencies and simple percentages, mean and standard deviation to summarize data on the demographic characteristics of respondents. On the other hand, multiple linear regression analysis was used to test hypothesis one and two while Standard Multiple Regression Analysis was used to test hypothesis three. All the analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

Results

Table 1: Multiple linear regression analysis showing the influence of emotion regulation dimensions on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria

Variables	R	R^2	df	F	β	t	Sig.
Antecedents-focused strategy					.060	.261	.000
	.502	.252	2,248	21.586		17.988	.000
Response-focused strategy					-.169	-.733	.000

The result presented in table 1 indicated that, there was a significant positive influence of emotion regulation dimensions on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West [R=.502, R^2 =.252, F(2, 248) =21.586; p<.01]. The result further indicated that, emotion regulation accounted for 25.2% of variance observed in psychological Well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, while the remaining percent is accounted for other variables. On their individual basis the result indicated that, antecedent-focused strategy (β=.060, t=.261; p<.01) made the highest positive independent contribution in changes observed in psychological well-being among inmates while response-focused strategy (β=-.169, t=-.733;p<.01) made a negative significant contribution in psychological well-being among inmates. The implication of this result is that, inmates who are capable of regulating their emotions has a tendency of being psychological well. Based on this finding, hypothesis one was confirmed.

Table 2: Multiple linear regression analysis showing the influence of coping strategies dimensions on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria

Variables	R	R^2	df	F	β	t	Sig.
Self-distraction					.223	3.418	.001
Active coping					.112	1.304	.004
Denial					.080	1.130	.000
Substance use					-.013	-.140	.089
Emotional support					.195	2.521	.012
Instrumental support					.076	.896	.001
Behavioural disengagement					.027	.325	.076
	.563	.317	14,236	28.460		.095	.000
Venting					-.041	-.544	.087
Positive reframing					-.081	-1.028	.005
Planning					.038	.383	.002
Humor					.248	3.174	.002
Acceptance					-.159	-1.708	.089
Religion					.543	.334	.000
Self-blame					.079	.980	.208

The result presented in table 2 revealed that, there was a significant positive influence of coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West [R=.563, R^2=.317, F(14,236)=28.460; p<.01]. Furthermore, the result indicated that coping strategies accounted for 31.7% of the variance observed in psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West while the remaining percent is accounted for other variables. On their individual basis, the result indicated that religion (β=.543, t=.334;p<01) made the highest positive contribution to psychological well-being among inmates, followed byhumor (β=.248, t=3.174;p<.01), self-distraction (β=.223, t=3.418;p<.01), emotional support (β=.195, t=2.521;p<.05), active coping (β=.112, t=1.304;p<.01), denial (β=.080, t=1.130;p<,01), instrumental support (β=.076, t=.896;p<.01), planning (β=.038, t=.383;p<.01), while positive reframing (β=-.081, t=-1.028;p<.01) made a positive contribution in changes observed in psychological well-being of inmates. On the contrary, the result indicated that behavioural disengagement (β=.027, t=.325;p>.05), venting (β=-.041, t=-.544;p>.05), substance use (β=-.013, t=-.140;p>.05), acceptance (β=-.159, t=-1.708;p>.05) and self-blame (β=.079, t=.980;p>.05) made no significant contribution in psychological Well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West. This implies that, inmates who engaged in denial, religion, self-distraction, instrumental support, planning, humor, active coping, positive reframing, emotion support had a tendency of being psychologically well compare to those with behaviourally disengaged, venting, used substances, and self-blamed. Based on this result, hypothesis two is confirmed.

Table 3: Standard multiple regression analysis showing the influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria

Variables	R	R^2	df	F	β	t	Sig.
Self-distraction					.241	3.685	.000
Active coping					.104	1.181	.002
Denial					.086	1.218	.024
Substance use					-.008	-.087	.931
Emotion support					.197	2.561	.011
Instrumental support					.102	1.196	.233
Behavioural disengagement					.044	.521	.603
Venting					-.074	-.969	.334
	.575	.330	16,234	37.733		.928	.000
Positive reframing					-.114	-1.413	.009
Planning					.035	.348	.028
Humor					.240	3.083	.002
Acceptance					-.161	-1.739	,003
Religion					.321	.233	.001
Self-blame					.084	1.041	.299
Antecedent-focused strategy					-.124	-.585	.051
Response-focused strategy					.002	.008	.003

The result presented in table 3 revealed that, there was a joint significant influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West. [R=.575, R^2=.330, F (16,234)=37.733;p<.01]. The result further indicated that, emotion regulation and coping strategies jointly accounted for 33% of the variance observed in psychological well-being among inmates while the remaining percent is accounted for other variables. On their individual basis the result indicated that, religion (β=.321, t=.233;p<.01), self-distraction (β=.241, t=3.685;p<.01), humor (β=.240, t=3.083;p<.01), emotional support (β=.197, t=2.561;p<.05) active coping (β=.104, t=1.181;p<.01), denial (β=.086, t=1.218;p<.05), planning (β=.035, t=.348;p<.05)and response-focused strategy (β=.002, t=.008;p<.01), made a positive significant contribution in psychological well-being among inmates, while acceptance (β=-.161, t=-1.739;p<.05) and positive reframing (β=-.114, t=-1.413;p<.05) had a negative significant influence in psychological well-being among inmates. Conversely, antecedent (β=-.585;p>.05), instrumental support (β=.102, t=1.196;p>.05), self-blame (β=.084, t=1.041;p>.05), venting (β=-.074, t=-.969;p>.05), behavioural disengagement (β=.044, t=.521;p>.05) and substance use (β=-.008, t=-.087;p>.05) did not contribute significantly in psychological well-being among inmates. The implication of this result is that, inmates who engaged in self-blame, religion, active coping, humor, response-focused strategy, denial, and planning has a tendency of influencing positively their psychological Well-being. Based on this result hypothesis three is confirmed.

Incidental Findings

Demographic characteristics that were included in this research were not captured in the of hypotheses. This section therefore sought to identify if there will be a significant independent and interactive effect of age, duration of incarceration and category of inmates on psychological wellbeing among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, NigeriaThis was tested using univariate analysis of variance and the result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Univariate Analysis of Variance showing the main and interaction effect of age, duration of incarceration and category of inmate on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	eta
Corrected Model	6815.464[a]	17	400.910	1.407	.003	.013
Intercept	122630.616	1	122630.616	430.503	.000	.649
Age	539.734	2	269.867	.947	.389	.008
Duration	810.547	3	270.182	.948	.418	.012
Category	60.656	1	60.656	.213	.005	.001
Age * Duration	772.434	5	154.487	.542	.041	.012
Age * Category	52.211	2	26.106	.092	.012	.001
Duration* Category	1287.058	2	643.529	2.259	.017	.019
Age * Duration * Category	1600.914	2	800.457	2.810	.002	.024
Error	66371.077	233	284.854			
Total	716586.000	251				

The result in table 4 indicated that, age had no significant main effect on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West [F (3,233) =.947; p>.05] with the effect size of .008. This means that younger and older inmates do not differ significantly on their psychological well-being indicating that differences in age groups does not significantly contribute to variations in psychological well-being among inmates. Similarly, the main effect of duration of incarceration does not significantly account for psychological well-being of inmates [F (3,233) = .948; p>.05], suggesting that the length of time spent in incarceration does not independently predict differences in psychological well-being. Additionally, the main effect of inmate category [F (1,233) = .213; p<.05] is minimal, demonstrating that whether an inmate belongs to a specific classification (e.g., awaiting trial or convicted) significantly impacted their psychological well-being.

However, the interaction effects between age and duration of incarceration was significant [F (5,233) = .542; p<.05) suggesting that the relationship between age and psychological well-being may depend on the length of incarceration, though the effect size remains minimal. Furthermore, the interaction effect between age, duration of incarceration, and inmate category [F (2,233) = 2.810; p<.05) was significant, indicating that the combined effect of these factors had a notable impact on psychological well-being of inmates. This implies that psychological well-being of inmates depends on the relationship between inmates' age, how long they have been incarcerated, and their classification within the correctional system.

Table 5: Summary of Scheffe Post-Hoc test showing the effect of age, on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria

Age (i)	Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Less than 30 years	31-40 years	-2.3627	2.56625	.655
	41 and above years	-7.9540*	3.19665	.047
31-40 years	Less than 30 years	2.3627	2.56625	.655
	41 and above years	-5.5913	2.78590	.136
41 and above years	Less than 30 years	7.9540*	3.19665	.047
	31-40 years	5.5913	2.78590	.136

The result presented in table 5 revealed a post-hoc analysis Scheffe test of effect of age on psychological Well-being among inmates. The result of the mean difference revealed that inmates who were less than 30 years did not differ significantly from those between 31-40 years (MD=-2.366, p>.05), but differ significantly from those between 41 years and above (MD=-7.954, p<.05). Also, those between 31-40 years did not differ significantly from those less than 30 years (MD=2.363, p>.05) and those between 41 years and above (MD=-5.591, p>.05). Those between 41 years and above differed significant from those less than 30 years (MD=.7.954, p<.05), but did not differ from those between 31-40 years (MD=.5.591, p>.05).

Discussion

Hypothesis one of this study was tested to investigate the influence of emotion regulation on psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria. Finding revealed a significant influence of emotion regulation on psychological well-being of inmates. Emotion regulation is characterized by the ability of incarcerated individuals to manage and control their emotions effectively, particularly in a stressful and restrictive correctional environment. It involves recognizing, understanding, and appropriately expressing emotions like anger, frustration, fear, and sadness, rather than reacting impulsively or aggressively. This finding implies that incarcerated individuals often expressnegative emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, and depression due to the restrictive and stressful correctional environment. Poor emotion regulation can lead to aggressive behavior, conflicts with other inmates and staff, and difficulty adjusting to correctional lifesince many inmates struggle with past trauma, mental health disorders, or poor coping skills, emotion regulation is vital for reducing violence, improving mental well-being, and supporting rehabilitation. This finding is in line with Granados et al. (2023) who investigated the effectiveness of a programmes for the development of socio-emotion competences in people admitted to a penitentiary center. The objective was to equip inmates with social competences in emotion regulation strategies that would be useful to them in the penitentiary center and, at the same time, facilitate their future social inclusion. Also, Ifeagwazi et al. (2020) found emotion regulation dispositional mindfulness and duration of stay as factors in somatic symptoms among inmates in South-Eastern Correctional Center. With similar study by Chiclana et al. (2019) who found mental health, positive emotions and well-being in Correctional Center. This finding suggest that, inmates who experience, express and respond to emotions negatively, will have serious implications to their well-being.

Hypothesis two was tested to find out the influence of coping strategies on psychological Well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria. Findings indicated that, coping strategies influenced psychological well-being among inmates. Coping strategies are the cognitive and behavioural techniques inmates use to manage stress, emotions, and challenging situations. These strategies help them to regulate emotion responses, reduce distress, and improve overall well-being.This implies that, in the correctional environment, coping strategies play an important role in inmates' psychological well-being and adjustment to incarceration. This finding agreed with those of Abrifor et al. (2023) who found coping strategies to predict psychological well-being among inmates in Kuje Correctional Facility. Also, Muring'u et al. (2021) found that coping strategies influenced psychological Well-being of life-sentenced inmates in maximum-security correctional center in Kenya. Similarly, Bisri et al. (2020) who found emotion-focused coping strategies as a predictor of new inmates' adjustment. This finding therefore, portends that, inmates with higher coping skills tends to have better psychological well-being than those with lesser coping strategies.

Hypothesis three was tested to examine the joint influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates. Finding indicated a significant joint influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates. This implies that inmates who can effectively regulate their emotions and employ adaptive coping strategies are more likely to experience better mental health outcomes. This finding is in agreement with those of Tanveeret al. (2023) who investigated the relationship between Emotional Dysregulation, Coping Strategies andPost-Traumatic Stress Symptoms in adolescents living at Line of Control (LOC) among 400 adolescents from private and government schools in Zagreb Croatia and found that Emotional Dysregulation and Emotion Focused Coping had a positive and highlysignificant relationship with Post-traumatic stress symptoms. Relatedly, Middlehurst (2019) investigated the relationship between the predictor variables of emotion regulation and coping skills on thecriterion variable of psychological wellbeing (depression, anxiety, and stress) among 73 undergraduate students and found that ERQ cognitive reappraisal significantly predicted DASS depression, DASS anxiety, and DASS stress. However, it was discovered that only avoidance copingskills were correlated with DASS depression, DASS anxiety, and DASS stress. This finding therefore holds that, emotion regulation and coping strategies, are significantly associated with inmates' psychological well-being irrespective of their age and category of inmates.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that emotion regulation and coping strategies are significant determinants of psychological well-being among inmates of correctional centers in Benue North-West Senatorial district, Nigeria. When independently and jointly tested with age, duration of incarceration and category of inmates showed significant interaction on psychological Well-being of inmates.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study. They are;

i. Since emotion regulation plays a vital role in the psychological well-being of inmates, clinical psychologists, correctional officers should develop interventions with a view to enhancing inmates' ability to manage their emotions effectively. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programmes can enhance self-awareness and emotion control.
ii. Clinical psychologists should prioritize coping mechanisms among inmates and guide them towards adaptive coping strategies (e.g., problem-solving, relaxation techniques, and social support adaptive coping strategies incorporating programmes that teach inmates how to deal with stressors in a correctional environment without resorting to maladaptive behaviours like substance abuse or violence.
iii. Clinical psychologists should design and implement integrated intervention programmes that simultaneously address both emotion regulation and coping skills, ensuring that inmates can effectively manage stress and regulate their emotions.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in psychology, correctional psychological health, and rehabilitation studies by providing empirical evidence on the influence of emotion regulation and coping strategies on psychological well-being among inmates**.**

The study deepens knowledge on how psychological well-being is influenced by internal psychological processes (emotion regulation) and external behavioral mechanisms (coping strategies)**.** The study confirmed that emotion regulation significantly influenced psychological well-being, the study supports existing research on therole of self-regulation in managing stress, aggression, and interpersonal conflicts in correctional environments.

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