

Research Article

INFLUENCE OF SOCIOLOGICAL STRESS COPING STRATEGIES ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF LIFE SENTENCED INMATES IN MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISONS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Human beings all over the world endeavour to have not only physical well being but also psychological well being. Psychological well being is observed when one has positive self regard, positive relationships, personal autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Persons that are in prison for life also struggle to get to that same level of psychological well being. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of sociological stress coping strategies on the psychological well-being of life sentenced inmates in maximum security prisons in Kenya. Cognitive behavioural theory and Logo therapy theory guided this study. This study was a descriptive survey. The target population was life sentenced inmates in nine maximum security prisons in Kenya. The accessible population was 4,487 life sentenced inmates. The sample size of the life sentenced inmates was 365 which was selected through simple random sampling. In addition, 30 specialized prison officers were purposively selected. Thus, the total sample size was 395 respondents. The study collected data using questionnaires for life sentenced inmates, an adapted psychological well-being scale for life sentenced inmates and interviews for specialized prison officers. The findings of the study indicate that sociological coping strategies influence the psychological well-being of life sentenced inmates. The study recommends that; policy makers and stakeholders of correctional and rehabilitation of inmates prioritize on the psychological well-being of lifers for effective rehabilitation and reintegration of the inmates.

Keywords: Kenya, Sociological Stress Coping Strategies, Psychological Well-Being, Lifers.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings endeavor to have not only physical well-being but also psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is observed when one has positive self-regard, positive relationships, personal autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose and personal growth (Steptoe, 2019). Persons that are in prison for life also struggle to get to that same level of psychological well-being. All over the world there are thousands of people who have to spend a great part or the rest of their natural life in prison. According to the Kenya Law Resource Centre (2018) imprisonment is the most popular punishment and it entails the actual physical restraint of the offender by placing him in custody. A prison also called a correctional facility is a facility in which inmates or persons that have committed crime are confined and denied a variety of freedoms (Welch, 2014). Persons that are in prison experience stress due to the incarceration as well as due to the depriving environment of prison. Among stressful situations of prison is how to deal with boredom, segregation, sexual harassment and the anxiety of uncertainty of what to expect in case of release. They also have fear and worry over what happens to their properties and their families while they are in prison. Their freedom is curtailed; they have to follow the prison routine that incorporates constant headcounts and searches (Dye & Aday, 2019). Lifers have to strive to get along not only with fellow inmates but also with the prison warders. The prison environment could be unbearable due to congestion, constant noise and altercations. There could also be constant fear of outbreak of contagious diseases. Being in prison therefore is stressful and being able to cope with stress could contribute immensely to the rehabilitation process (Skoronski & Talik, 2018). It is possible humanely to bear with difficult situations but when

an individual is subjected to such a situation for a very long time or for a life time, one has to have coping strategies that would enable him or her survive or possibly adapt to the prison environment. There are various strategies of coping with stress in prison. The strategies could be positive or negative strategies. Among the positive strategies of coping with stress are physiological, sociological, psychological and religious activities. Some studies indicate that some prison inmates choose solitary isolation rather than being in open general wards because they feel safer. Nevertheless they experience the harmful effect of withdrawal such as anxiety and suicidal thoughts (Leonard, 2020). The negative or maladaptive ways of coping with stress involves obtaining and use of contraband substances and drug abuse and being involved in obtaining money fraudulently while in prison. Fights and infractions in prison could also be ways of venting out anger and bitterness. These could easily affect inmates that have a high duration in prison. The higher duration of imprisonment is life imprisonment. The purpose of imprisonment is to restrain and contain; that is; safe keeping in custody, deterrence and rehabilitation of the offender (Kenya Prisons Strategic Plan, 2012; Prison Act, CAP 90 part IV Art 34). Life sentence is the punishment by which somebody spends the rest of their natural life in prison or until paroled or given amnesty (Welch, 2014). Porter (2014) enumerated crimes for which a person could receive life sentence but they differ from one country to another and include; murder, blasphemy, terrorism, severe child abuse, rape, child rape, severe case of fraud or economic crimes, robbery with violence, Piracy, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Kara (2015) observed that, life imprisonment can in certain cases also be imposed for traffic offences causing death as a maximum term as is the case in some states in the US and Canada. United States has the world's highest population of persons in prison; consequently it leads in the population of life sentences at a rate of 50 people per 100,000 residents imprisoned for life (Petersilia, 2019). One in nine people in prison in America, is serving a life sentence, and nearly a third of lifers will never have a chance at Parole hearing

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because theirs is life without parole (LWOP); they are certain to die in prison (Dye & Aday, 2019; Willis & Zaitzow, 2015; Capers, 2012;). In America, sentences that exceed a century and sometimes 999 years have been given (Dye & Aday, 2019; Porter, 2014). James and Glaze (2016) observed that persons that are imprisoned for life, experience a lot of stress due to lack of contact, verbal and physical abuse. In addition they experience trauma of sexual abuse especially among women inmates and the young offenders, and solitary confinement for as long as 23 hours a day (National Alliance of Mental Illness, 2017). The consequence is worsening of psychiatric symptoms such as paranoia, extreme anxiety and depression, increased suicides attempts, homicides, sleep disturbances, hallucinations and self-harm. Such issues may have adverse traumatic effects on the mental health of the inmates and may be manifested as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The harmful effects of solitary confinement depend on the length of time people remain isolated (Drancoli, 2015). These forms of punishments according to Johnson (2011) result into deprivations caused by loss of liberty, material impoverishment, personal inadequacy, loss of heterosexual relationships, loss of autonomy, and loss of personal security. Frankl (2016) observed that while in the detention camps, in the Second World War II; prisoners had everything taken away from them, even their names. They were given numbers, which were tattooed on their skins (McEvoy, 2016). In most cases inmates are issued with a seven digit number that would henceforth act as their identity (Willis & Zaitow, 2015). The emotional and psychological forms of punishment of prison life today might be viewed as punishments which the free community deliberately inflicts on the offender for violating the law (Dye & Aday, 2019; Drancoli, 2015). There are countries that do not have life imprisonment as a sentence, for instance Portugal which was the first country to abolish life imprisonment under the Prison reforms of *Sampaio e Melo* in 1884 (Howes, 2009). Probably such reforms and decisions not to have life imprisonment were informed by the desire not to have persons exposed to trauma and probably depressing situations in prison. However, where life imprisonment is the possible sentence, in some cases there may be formal mechanisms to request parole after a certain period of imprisonment (Cole, 2014). This implies that a convict could be released from prison much earlier and serve the sentence outside prison (Howes, 2009). The Rome Statutes of International Criminal Court ICC, (2000) stipulates that for the gravest forms of crimes a prisoner ought to serve two thirds of a fixed sentence or 35-50 years as the highest determined prison sentence (Moruf, *et al.*, 2016). A number of European countries have abolished all forms of indefinite imprisonment including Serbia, Croatia and Spain, which sets a maximum sentence at 40 years. Bosnia and Herzegovina have a maximum sentence at 45 years (Cole, 2014). In some countries, life imprisonment is only for men such as Albania, Argentina, Azerbaijan and Belarus (Porter, 2014). In South Africa, offences of premeditated murder, gang rape, Serial rape, leads to life imprisonment. Courts in South Africa have in the past handed at least two sentences that have exceeded a century to individual offenders, that is, Moses Sithole and Eugene de Koch whose sentence were symbolic of life sentences (Derek, 2015). Every prison inmate could easily turn the tough time in prison into constructive time, if the pains of imprisonment are met by mature coping (Johnson, 2011). There are various ways that people imprisoned for life cope up with the stress of their incarceration. They embrace an optimistic sense of personal efficacy – a belief in their autonomy- that should serve them well during the often tough progress from confinement to freedom (Paluch, 2004; Willis & Zaitzow, 2015). Johnson (2011) opined that effective adaptation would seem first and foremost, the acceptance of one's limited situation. Majority of lifers opt also to avoid trouble and make the most of the opportunities for work, education and rehabilitative programs in prison (Dye & Aday, 2019). Some other coping mechanisms that inmates use include; writing books, poems

and stories in prison; which relaxes the mind and keeps them purposeful, composing songs, and video games; which allows the inmate to enter and live for a time in a fantasy world. Watching television and listening to music; which for lifers seems as offering a window on the real/outside world; one that they can share with loved ones when they visit (Johnson, 2011). Watching Television and listening to music may be viewed as an inactive form of coping but in the prison environment it may be helpful as ways of relaxing the mind. Capital punishment which includes life imprisonment was formally introduced into Kenyan legal system by the British during the colonial era (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 2015). After independence, the country continued to apply the penalty, although no executions of those on death row have been carried out in Kenya since 1986; when Hezekiah Ochuka and Pancras Okumu were hanged for alleged treason (Ondieki, 2016). The Kenyan Penal Code (2008) states that; "persons serving detention, during presidential pleasure, can be detained indefinitely and are not entitled to remission. However, anyone serving life sentence imprisonment or detention can be released under the president's prerogative of mercy." The board of sentence review conducts the review of sentences and provides advice to the president. The State law Office (2018) reported that President Uhuru on 24th October 2016, signed commutation documents turning all death sentences then into life jail terms. In the entire country there were 2,655 males and 92 females that benefitted from this commutation. The last commutation of death sentence to life imprisonment had been done in 2009 by the then President Mwai Kibaki. While commuting the death row for the 4,000 prisoners to life imprisonment, in 2009, the president stated that; "the mass commutation would help alleviate the undue mental anguish, psychological trauma and anxiety that resulted from extended stays on death row" (Cherono, 2016). The statement attests to the fact that; persons that are imprisoned, and especially on death row, experience psychological and mental anguish (Kubiak, 2004). This may be the case for not only the death row inmates but also for those on life imprisonment sentences. The major difference between the circumstances of the two is that the death row inmates awaits hanging any day, his or her life literally hangs on a balance (Nyandoro, 2013). The situation for the persons serving life sentence may perhaps be a bit different since for them there is a glimmer of hope; of being conditionally released (Kubiak, 2004). Nevertheless the continued stay in prison for persons sentenced for life becomes stressful not only due to the fact of being sentenced for life but also the trauma of verbal and physical abuse by fellow inmates, solitary confinement, constant exposure to the risk of contracting contagious diseases due to overcrowding and lack of proper medical attention. Kamoyo, *et al.*, (2015) observed that jails and prisons are required to provide basic health care for inmates but often prison-based mental health care focuses on stabilizing rather than treating inmates. Prisoners rarely get therapy or comprehensive treatment, so mental health issues that were previously controlled with medication worsen (Nyandoro, 2013). All these experiences may have far reaching effects on the psychological well-being of persons incarcerated for life. Mr. Moody Awori, who was the Vice President and minister in the Ministry for Home Affairs in Kenya in 2002, focused on improving the Kenyan prisons. On rehabilitation of prisoners Moody proposed the employment of professionals in fields such as criminology, sociology, theology, psychology and psychiatry (Moody, 2017; Ondieki, 2016). His proposals also recommended the development of vocational training, reviving of the parole system and review of the earning scheme for prisoners. The document suggested rolling out of paralegal services in prisons and restorative justice. Moody Awori even suggested (to the amusement of many) that prisoners be allowed conjugal visits. He observed that, "Prisoners are human beings who need to be rehabilitated. They are not social rejects bereft of any claim to the human right to love and the desire for acceptance"

(Ogosia, 2008). It was at his time that he introduced the open door policy. This meant that unlike before, individual and groups could now visit the prisons and that families of the inmates could pay a visit to them in prison (Ogeto, 2009). This was important as a means of promoting interactions between inmates that are husbands and fathers with their wives and children and vice versa. Prisoners were hence allowed to watch television as well as listen to transistor radios in their cells (Yaa, 2015). One of the pillars of Kenyan Vision 2030 is the political pillar, whose strategy is security, peace-building and conflict resolution. This strategy's vision is security for all persons and property throughout the Republic of Kenya (Kenya Vision, 2030). In order for the security of all persons to be attained notorious offenders must be put to prison; some for life. Nevertheless, persons in prison especially for life, perhaps need help toward rehabilitation and assistance toward their psychological well-being. In case of release, for such persons through successful court appeals, petitions, parole or presidential clemency, if their psychological well-being is not taken care of, they may never be the same. They would have a lot of difficulties fitting back into the society due to PTSD and may easily become victims of recidivism (McEvoy, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The population sample in this study was randomly selected from the maximum security prisons in Kenya. The study used simple random sampling to obtain a sample size of 365 inmates from the maximum security prisons. The study also through purposive sampling interviewed 30 prison officers involved in psycho-social welfare of inmates. Data was collected using structured and open ended questionnaires, a psychological well being scale, and an interview guide for prison officers. The validity of the instruments was ensured through including items that were in line with the objective of the study. A pilot study was conducted in one of the maximum security prison. The reliability was established through Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha threshold of internal consistency of 0.9 which was above 0.7 as recommended was considered adequate. Data was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25 while qualitative data was analyzed through Nvivo software version 12. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociological Stress Coping Strategies

Hamid and Manan (2013) sought to examine on different coping strategies that people suffering from diabetes can adopt from rural areas in Malaysia. A sample of 370 respondents was taken whereby questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data. It was found from the study that the subjects of the study could cope with stress by talking together with their family. In addition, it was suggested that efficient coping strategies should be practiced by these patients in order to reduce stress. Sharing problems with friends and fellow inmates at prison eases the psychological tension (Lim & Putnam, 2010). Social support has been defined as information from others that one is loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and has a network of communication and mutual obligations from parents, a spouse or lover, other relatives, friends, social and community contacts such as churches or clubs (Blonna, 2011). Sociological stress coping strategies implies the adjustive (coping) resources that offer patience and competence to face difficult times in company of another person or a group of people. This in some way is beneficial for coping process because affiliation with others and comparing feelings and opinions are important styles of coping with such threats emotionally and psychologically (Ellison, 2012). In

sharing distress with others undergoing the same difficulties, some studies have suggested that cohesion may result among these individuals (Moloney, 2013). However, when a stressor persists in an irresolvable manner, psycho-physiological problems may arise. Coping must focus on lifestyle, specifically including how they work, play, relax, what and how they eat, their social activities. The social interaction could also be constructive or unconstructive. Inmates could learn positive things from each other and at the same time they could mentor each other in ways that may not be constructive. Hardcore prison inmates could initiate the naive and green prison inmates on how to be tough. Coping requires the services of social support mechanisms (Scott, 2019). Good health depends not only on what is going on in one's body and mind, but also on what goes on in one's relationship: what one may take from them and what one may give out. People with high levels of social support may experience less stress when they confront a stressful experience, and may cope with it more successfully and live longer. Inmates that may have a network of support or visits from their loved ones may experience warmth and a sense of acceptability. One way social support protects against stress is by enhancing immune functioning (Moloney, 2013). People can also gain strength by giving it to others-healing through helping. It shifts your attention from your own worries to others who are worse off than you. Atabong (2007) contended that prisoners by definition, are cut off from the rest of society and their access to supportive friends and family may be limited. Many jails have mail policies prohibiting letters and magazines subscriptions and these policies can eliminate prisoner's ability to communicate with and receive support from loved ones (Sakala, 2013). Persons imprisoned for life may perhaps be stressed up by the abandonment of their families and friends. Frequent visits on the other hand may boost their morale as well as their sociological and psychological well-being. The fact that a prisoner can be transferred from one prison to another implies that he could be taken further away from where the family and friends could easily visit. The alternative to this distancing could be through communicating through the phone. Many prisons in Kenya have phone that inmates can access and make use of but at their own cost (Musyoka, 2013). The fact that the phones are for pay again makes the inmates that are from poor backgrounds unable to make use of the same. Social support minimizes the effect of stress. Social support involves acts that communicate caring, that validate the others words, feelings and actions or that facilitate adaptive coping with problems through the provision of assistance or tangible resource (Scott, 2019). Social support may contribute positively to the mental health of persons that are in prison and social support from family members is the mainstay of coping with stress (Yilmaz, *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand some inmates are from dysfunctional families as was pointed out by Atabong (2007). Dysfunctional families or families that have been offended by their relative who is in prison may not be supportive to the inmate and therefore he or she has no family to fall back to for support. A supportive, understanding group that can help one another during stressful times (Crawford, 2003). Prisoner's social support is twofold; they would wish to be connected to the outside world of family, friends and the society. This is not always the case because of the prison restrictions and at times, strained family relationship (Willis & Zaitzow, 2015). The other connection is amongst themselves; that is inmate to inmate social connections. Maintaining social relationship outside of prison is difficult given the restricted means and moments to communicate (Bronson, 2008). Visits from family and friends are also in most cases limited to three to five times in a year (Willis & Zaitzow, 2015) as such fellow prisoners are often the only directly available sources to fulfil the need for social connection (Viggiani, 2006). However, prison organization as observed in other studies (Marshal, Simpson & Stevens, 2000; Miller & Najavits, 2012) is complicated it is often hierarchically organized with tough or violent offenders occupying the

upper social strata and weaker ostracized prisoners occupying the lower strata. In such situations violence, intimidation and bullying is common and most prisoners have to continuously struggle for legitimization and acceptance. On the other hand prisoners that have positively adjusted to the life of prison could be tolerant to others and as it was observed by Johnson and Dobrzanska (2005) lifers by virtue of having stayed longer in prison might offer themselves as positive mentors to the young or newcomer inmates. It is also possible that the more seasoned prisoners could negatively mentor the new inmates by introducing them to infractions and defiance against the prison authority. Positive social relations for the prison community, where they exist, are helpful for the mental health of the inmates. They bring about emotional strength, personal integrity and positive mental health. A study by Hughes and Huby (2000) found out that prison communities exhibit and share norms and values of their host and the society around, in this sense prisoners "import" values and attitudes, beliefs and social norms from their present culture. Social structures in prison generally mirror the social structures outside prison often based on similarities in age, ethnicity, religion, education level and therefore prisoners socialize based on those factors (Crewe, 2009; Skarbek, 2014). Prisoners adapt to the "pains of imprisonment" by either exploiting their peers or fostering community solidarity to minimize collective deprivation and resist institutional dehumanization (Viggiani, 2006). There also exists genuine friendship among the inmates, studies in the past found that in prison friendships can provide prisoners with emotional support and peer relations may ease the pain of imprisonment (wulf- Ludden, 2013). Social network is an important tool to cope with incarceration; sociological research applies a social network approach to study the interdependence between persons and their social environment (Brass, et al., 2014). A social network is defined as a set of individuals within a bounded setting who are connected through measurable social ties such as friendship; inmates find themselves thus connected (Veenstra, Dijkstra & Kreager, 2018). Social ties among prisoners tend to be reciprocal and transitive in that "friends of my friends are also my friends". These reciprocity leads to social connections and tendency to care. Prison inmates could get used to each other and establish friendship such that they are able to get along with each other. The longer prisoners stay together, there is a likelihood of them to bond and be more supportive to each other as was found out by studies by Kreagar *et al.*, (2017). Prisoners who were older and who had spent more time in prison were the most connected in the prison unit. This may imply then that lifers due to the fact of being in prison for a long time may establish stronger and lasting social connections with their fellow inmates even though if it may be through patterns of homophily- a preference for age, ethnicity, religion or the time spent in prison (Schaefer, *et al.*, 2017). It may also be true that short sentenced prisoners remain connected to the outside world of prison and see no much need in having prison based ties (Liebling & Arnold, 2012). In a study that was based in the University of Rochester School of Medicine, Vegas *et al.*, (2012) carried out a study to establish on the coping strategies that would help female mice to heal their wounds. A sample of 32 subjects of the study of those who received social support and those who did not was used. It was revealed from the study that social interaction would be vital in order for the female mice to heal their wounds. Life sentenced inmates have wounds that may also require understanding and social support in order to heal. Khalili *et al.*, (2013) carried out a study in Iran that sought to establish on the coping strategies that were embraced by mothers suffering from breast cancer. The study made use of a sample of 62 subjects of the study where questionnaires were used to collect data. It was revealed from the study findings that they used active coping such as seeking professional help and social support in order to cope with their situation. On the other hand, the study recommended that when

evaluating psychological wellbeing, individual strategies should be considered. This study hoped to establish whether the sociological stress coping is helpful in Kenyan prisons and if so whether it contributes to the psychological well-being of life sentenced inmates in the maximum security prisons.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study targeted to collect data from 365 lifers and 30 prison officers. Table 3 shows the response rate achieved in this study.

Table 1

Response Rate

Respondent	Sample	Response	Response Rate
Lifers	365	350	95.89%
Prison Officers	30	24	80.00%
Total	395	374	94.68%

Table 1 indicates that out of the targeted 365 lifers, the study managed to collect data from 350 lifers which presented a response rate of 95.89%. Though the study targeted to interview 30 prison officers, the study managed to conduct interviews from 24 prison officers within the period of data collection. This presented a response rate of 80.00%. The overall sample for the study was 395 respondents, however a response of 374 respondents was obtained. Therefore the overall response rate was 94.68%. According to O'Sullivan *et al.*, (2016) a response rate of at least 70% implies that the feedback obtained can be generalized to the entire population from which the sample was taken. Therefore the findings revealed in this study will be generalizable to all life sentenced inmates in maximum security prisons in Kenya. The psychological well being of the lifers was determined through Ryffe's 42 items Psychological well being scale. The scale is a six-point likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-weakly disagree, 4-weakly agree, 5-agree and 6-strongly agree. It incorporates all the six dimension of psychological well-being, namely personal autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationship, purpose in life, personal growth and self acceptance. If the results of each dimension of the psychological well being were to be presented individually, it would make this publication voluminous. This was therefore deliberately left out, nevertheless the overall result of the psychological well being was predicated with the sociological stress coping strategies to determine the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The findings of the statements on sociological coping strategies are presented. The study used a five point Likert scale for prisoners to express their agreement or disagreement on these statements. The five points on the Likert scales were; 1-Strongly Disagree (SD), 2-Disagree (D), 3- Undecided (U), 4-Agree (A), 5-Strongly Agree (SA). In respect to this scale, a standard deviation greater than 1.000 would represent a large spread in responses while a standard deviation less than 1.000 would represent commonness in responses. On the other hand, an achieved mean less than 3.00 implied that majority of the prisoners on average disagreed with the corresponding statement while a mean greater than 3.00 showed agreement with the corresponding statement.

Table 2 presents the responses of the life sentenced inmates.

Table 2

Sociological Stress Coping Strategies

Sociological Stress Coping Strategies	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	Mean	Std. Dev.
I belong to a group that we discuss about our problems	74 21.1	26 7.4	20 5.7	80 22.9	150 42.9	3.59	1.589
I deal with my problems in prison by sharing with others	70 20.0	24 6.9	17 4.9	62 17.7	177 50.6	3.72	1.599
I try to have self-control	66 18.9	15 4.3	19 5.4	93 26.6	157 44.9	3.74	1.520
I understand myself better in relation to others	60 17.1	17 4.9	7 2.0	85 24.3	181 51.7	3.89	1.506
I am conscious of others	40 11.4	19 5.4	6 1.7	104 29.7	181 51.7	4.05	1.335
I visit others that are in need here in prison e.g. the sick	29 8.3	5 1.4	8 2.3	41 11.7	267 76.3	4.46	1.174
I like sharing my concerns with close friends.	65 18.6	45 12.9	14 4.0	60 17.1	166 47.4	3.62	1.601
I am visited by family and friends.	99 28.3	41 11.7	15 4.3	31 8.9	164 46.9	3.34	1.761
I like entertaining others e.g. with drama/comedy	67 19.1	25 7.1	29 8.3	66 18.9	163 46.6	3.67	1.566
I like interacting with others	45 12.9	34 9.7	33 9.4	66 18.9	172 49.1	3.82	1.451
I like watching others play games here in prison	45 12.9	39 11.1	47 13.4	69 19.7	150 42.9	3.69	1.440
I participate with others in games as a team player	75 21.4	41 11.7	35 10.0	58 16.6	141 40.3	3.43	1.605
I interact well with prison staff and authority	59 16.9	33 9.4	27 7.7	71 20.3	160 45.7	3.69	1.529
I work well with others e.g. in prison workshop/farm	70 20.0	42 12.0	23 6.6	48 13.7	167 47.7	3.57	1.627
I share stories of my life with my fellow inmates	56 16.0	31 8.9	28 8.0	71 20.3	164 46.9	3.73	1.509
Composite Scores						3.73	1.521

Table 2 indicates that on average, majority of the lifers belonged to a group that they discussed about their problems. This was evident from a mean of 3.59 achieved, which is greater than 3.00. In respect to this, 42.9% strongly agreed while 22.9% agreed that they belonged to a group that they discuss about their problems. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.589 attained, which is greater than 1.500, implied that there was a large spread in responses given by lifers and thus a lack of consensus. In agreement to this, welfare officers interviewed indicated that inmates belonged to different groups where they share their problems. One of the welfare officer indicated that;

“We have social support groups in the prison. Some prisoners that could be going through the same challenge such as those that are HIV positive often come together to encourage each other on what their status requires them to do in order to remain healthy. Lifers also encourage and give hope to each other.”

In regard to dealing with problems in prison, 50.6% of the respondents strongly agreed while 20.0% strongly disagreed that they shared their problems with others. This resulted to lack of consensus among the respondents as evidenced by a standard deviation of 1.599 which is greater than 1.500. A mean of 3.72 achieved, which is greater than 3.00, revealed that on average, the prisoners dealt with their problems in prison through sharing with others. In line to this,

Hamid and Manan (2013) found that respondents coped with stress by talking together with their family. Following the statement on self-control, the study revealed that on average, majority of the respondents said that they tried to have self-control. This was evident from a mean of 3.74 attained, which is greater than 3.00. In addition, 44.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 26.6% agreed. However, a standard deviation of 1.520 achieved, which is greater than 1.500, implied that there was a large spread in responses among the lifers. Lack of consensus in responses was unveiled on lifers' understanding about themselves better in relation to others. This was evidenced by a standard deviation greater than 1.500 (1.560). On the other hand, 51.7% of the prisoners strongly agreed they understood themselves better in relation to others and 24.3% of them agreed. A mean of 3.89 achieved, which is greater than 3.00, implied that on average, the lifers understood themselves better in relation to others. Further, majority of the lifers on average said that they were conscious of others. This was evidenced by a mean of 4.05. The study further found that 51.7% of the prisoners strongly agreed with the statement while 29.7% agreed that they were conscious of others. A standard deviation of 1.335 attained, which is less than 1.500 implied that there was consensus in responses by the lifers. The study also found that majority of the respondents tended to agree that they visited others that are in need in prison like the sick (11.7%=Agree, 76.3%=Strongly Agree). On average, the lifers visited others that were in need in prison. This was evidenced by mean of 4.46 attained, which is greater than 3.00. A standard deviation of 1.174 achieved, which is less than 1.500, implied that there was a small spread in responses and thus consensus among the respondents on this metric. On average, majority of the respondents said that they liked sharing their concerns with close friends. This was evident from a mean of 3.62 which is greater than 3.00. The study further found 47.4% of the prisoners strongly agreed while 18.6% strongly disagreed that they liked sharing their concerns with close friends. This resulted to a standard deviation of 1.601, which is greater than 1.500. This implied that there was high variance in responses from lifers on the extent of agreement on sharing their concerns with close friends. The study also revealed that on average, respondents were visited by family and friends as evidenced by a mean of 3.34. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.761 attained implied that there was a large spread in responses. In respect to this, 46.9% of the lifers strongly agreed that they were visited by family and friends while 28.3% strongly disagreed with the same. In regard to entertaining others while in prison, majority of the lifers strongly agreed (46.6%) that they liked entertaining others with drama or comedy while 19.1% strongly disagreed. A standard deviation of 1.566 achieved, showed that there was divergent of responses given by lifers. However, a mean of 3.67 attained depicted that on average, respondents entertained others in prison. It was further revealed that majority agreed that they enjoyed interacting with others, (18.9%= Agree, 49.1%= Strongly Agree). A mean of 3.82 attained, which is greater than 3.00, depicted that on average, majority of the respondents said that they enjoyed interacting with others. On the other hand, a standard deviation of 1.451 gotten, which is less than 1.500, implied that there was divergence in responses given by prisoners on whether they enjoyed interacting with others. One of the interviewed prison chaplain indicated that inmates interacted among themselves and there were many opportunities to interact while in prison. The chaplain asserted that;

“Being a lifer is not a good experience; however, the lifers are able to cope through interacting with each other and with the prison staff. They have various forum of interaction; namely the prison school, the prison workshops/industries, in the church and their small support groups.”

Following the statement on watching games in prison with others, the study found that there was consensus in responses given by the lifers. This was evidenced by a standard deviation of 1.440 which is less than 1.500. In addition, a mean of 3.69 achieved, which is greater than 3.00, implied that on average, the lifers said that they enjoyed watching others play games in prison. It was also found that lifers agreed that they liked watching others play games in prison (Agree=19.7%, Strongly Agree=42.9%). Based on participation in games, 40.3% of the respondents strongly agreed while 21.4% strongly disagreed with the same. This resulted to a standard deviation of 1.605 implying that there was large spread of in responses. However, mean of 3.43 attained, which is greater than 3.00, depicted that on average, the prisoners said that they participated with others in games as team players. A large spread in responses was also revealed from a standard deviation of 1.529 (greater than 1.500) achieved from a statement on interaction with prison staffs and authority. On the other hand, a mean of 3.69 reached, which is greater than 3.00, implied that on average, majority of the respondents interacted well with prison staffs and authority. The study further found that 45.7% of the respondents strongly agreed while 20.3% agreed that they interacted well with prison staffs and authority. It was further revealed that on average, the lifers worked well with others in prison as evidenced by a mean of 3.57. The study also found that 47.7% of the respondents strongly agreed while 20.0% strongly disagreed with the same statement giving rise to a standard deviation of 1.627. This implied that there was divergence of views expressed by the prisoners on how well they worked with others in prison. Majority of the respondents were also found to agree that they shared stories of their life, (Agree=20.3%, 46.9%=Strongly Agree). A mean of 3.73 realized showed that on average, the prisoners shared stories of their life with fellow inmates. However, a large spread in responses was also unveiled from a standard deviation of 1.509. This implied that the inmates had divergence views on whether they shared stories about their life with fellow inmates. Composite scores obtained in sociological coping strategies presented overall mean and standard deviation. An overall mean of 3.73 achieved was greater than 3.00, implied that on average, majority of the life sentenced inmates used sociological stress coping strategies. An overall standard deviation of 1.521 obtained, which is greater than 1.500, showed that the life inmates held different opinions in regard to the sociological stress coping strategies. The aspect of visiting others that are in need in prison such as the sick was highly rated and agreed upon compared to other sociological stress coping strategies. On the other hand, the aspect of being visited by family and friends at prison was least rated implying that it was least done at the prisons. The study further requested the respondents to cite any other sociological stress coping strategies that they used while in prison. The study analyzed the qualitative data and presented the results in Table 3

Table 1

Other Sociological Coping Strategies

Themes	Codes	References
1.0 Sociological Coping Strategies	1.01 Healthy Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing with trustworthy friends and staff • Socializing and sharing • Talking current affairs with fellow inmates • Talking politics with other inmates • Talking with others on current affairs • Chatting with others helps me • Talking a lot with other inmates on past experiences and the current affairs

- Talking with fellow inmates
 - Talking with prison officers that guard us
 - Reading novels with other inmates
 - Sharing and discussing burning issues
 - Sharing and trying to understand myself better
 - I share my problems and strive to understand myself better
 - Talking a lot to the younger inmates
 - Talking politics
 - Interaction
 - Sharing experiences with other inmates
 - Sharing fun with others
 - Healthy discussions with other inmates and prison staff
 - Discussing with others on future plans
 - Sharing current political affairs with fellow inmates
- 1.02 Recreational Activities
- Playing draft
 - Gymnastics
 - Acrobatic and gymnastic activities
 - Watching News and games on TV
 - Playing keyboard and teaching others how to play
 - Dancing and singing with others
 - Playing cards
 - Singing and dancing
 - Shouting loudly
 - Dancing
 - Painting and drawing
 - Playing guitar for others to dance
 - Playing snakes and ladders
 - Playing keyboard
 - Dancing and singing
 - Playing guitar
 - Playing chess
 - Playing Bingo
 - Playing and sharing political ideas
 - Listening to the radio and watching TV
 - Playing keyboard for the choir
 - I enjoy quiet moments where I can meditate about past good times
 - Keep myself busy always by reading and exercises
 - Remaining silent, sleeping
- 1.03 Family Communication
- Keeping in touch with my family through phone by requesting the welfare office to allow me call my family and request for special visits by my family
 - Calling my family through welfare phone keeps me informed of their whereabouts
 - Calls to my family through the welfare office
 - Making calls home through welfare office.

Table 3 indicates that the life inmates coped socially by involving themselves in healthy interactions such as sharing with trustworthy friends and staff, talking about current affairs, the future, politics, past experiences and other burning issues with fellow inmates as well talking with prison officers that guard them. Recreational activities with other inmates were also cited as sociological stress coping strategies by the lifers. This included playing draft with others, acrobatic and gymnastic activities, watching news and games on TV,

listening to the radio, playing keyboard and guitar and teaching others how to play, dancing and singing with others, playing cards, chess, draft, snakes and ladders and Bingo with others, and painting and drawing. Others on the other hand enjoyed quiet moments where they could meditate about past good times, others kept themselves busy always by reading and exercises and yet others remained silent and took sleep as a coping strategy. The study further established that some lifers in the prison treasured family communication in order to cope with stress. This involved keeping in touch with their family through phone by requesting the welfare office to allow them call their family and request for special visits by their families. Vegas *et al.*, (2012) revealed that social interaction was vital in order for individuals to heal their wounds. Khalili *et al.*, (2013) on the other hand revealed that victims used active coping such as seeking professional help and social support in order to cope with their situation.

Regression between Sociological Stress Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-Being

The study used the regression analysis to study the influence between sociological coping strategies and the overall psychological well-being of life sentenced inmates in maximum security prisons in Kenya. Table 4 to shows the simple regression model in meeting the hypothesis of the study.

Table 4 presents the influence of the sociological stress coping strategies on the psychological wellbeing of lifers.

Table 4

Influence of Sociological Stress Coping Strategies on Psychological Wellbeing of Lifers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.532	0.163		15.490	0.000
Sociological Coping Strategies	0.326	0.043	0.376	7.575	0.000

R=0.376, R Square=0.142, Adjusted R Square=0.139, F (1,348) = 57.379, P<0.05

- a. Dependent Variable: Psychological Wellbeing
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Sociological Coping Strategies

Table 3 indicates that there was a weak correlation between the sociological coping strategies and psychological wellbeing as indicated by an R value of 0.376. This further indicates that the model does not provide a good fit for the data. This is due to an R-Square value of 0.142 that was obtained in the model. Focusing on the adjusted R square value, the study observed that an addition of more predictor variables would improve the model less than expected due to an adjusted R value less than the R-Square value (0.139). It was also revealed that 14.2% of the variation in psychological wellbeing of all prisoners from all maximum prisons in Kenya was attributed to sociological coping strategies. It was further noted that the regression model as a whole was significant as shown by a p<0.05. It further indicates that the regression model provide a better fit for the data than a model with zero predictors. The study revealed there was a statistically significant relationship between sociological coping strategies and psychological wellbeing as evidenced by p<0.05. In respect to this, the study revealed a beta coefficient of 0.326 for sociological coping strategies with a p<0.05. This implied that a unit increase in the sociological coping strategies resulted to 0.326 units increase in the psychological wellbeing with other variables held

constant. The null hypothesis stating that there is no statistically significant influence of sociological stress coping strategies on the psychological well-being of life sentenced inmates in maximum security prisons in Kenya was reject at 5% significance level. The alternative hypothesis that there is statistically significant influence of sociological stress coping strategies on the psychological well-being of lifers in maximum security prisons in Kenya was adopted.

CONCLUSION

Correctional facilities are intended to serve diverse purposes which include keeping the imprisoned persons in safe custody, deterrence, rehabilitation and behavior modification. The prison inmates may have very limited time of meaningful interaction due to the rules and regulations of prison. However instances that would enable inmates to interact with each other and the support that they may be accorded for social interactions are vital. Formation of healthy social network in and out of the prison through frequent communication with family and friends could be helpful. Social strategies are important not only in the rehabilitation work but also in enhancing the psychological well being of the life sentenced persons. The study therefore established that there exists an influence of sociological stress coping strategies on the psychological well being of life sentenced prison inmates in maximum security prisons in Kenya.

Recommendation of the study.

Establishment of social forums and embracing of sociological coping mechanisms could be helpful in the work of rehabilitation. Regular visits, communication through phones and letters could enhance the social interaction of persons imprisoned for life. This social connection could enhance the psychological well being of life-sentenced inmates. Prison services as well as other key players and policy makers such as government agencies could further explore sociological strategies as one of the ways of enhancing the psychological well being of life sentenced prison inmates.

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