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# ASSESSING CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS IN CUSTODIAL JUVENILE OFFENDERS AT AWKA AND ENUGU FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES IN NIGERIA: A CROSS-SECTIONAL DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY

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## ABSTRACT

*There is an increasing incidence of juvenile offending marked with astronomical trend in re-offending risks among custodial juveniles in Nigeria. Evidence suggests including criminogenic risk/needs in rehabilitation strategies for juvenile offenders. The deplorable service and conditions in correctional facilities in Nigeria have been associated with high-risk of re-offending in juvenile inmates in borstals, approved schools, remand homes and custodial centers. The current study examined the level of criminogenic needs and risks of re-offending in juvenile inmates at Federal Correctional facilities in Awka and Enugu area custodial centers. A total sample size of 43 eligible juvenile inmates were assessed on their level of criminogenic needs and risks of re-offending using the adapted Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) Nigerian version. Results showed that juveniles in both correctional centers were at high- risk of re-offending. Male juvenile inmates' total mean score fell within high-risk classifications; whereas female juvenile inmates' total mean score fell within the moderate-risk classification. The findings suggest that male juvenile offenders had the highest tendency of re-offending risks followed by female juvenile offenders. Implying that gender sensitive interventions and programs are urgently needed to*



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*address the observed masculinity -feministic dialectics in juvenile re-offending trajectory. The study recommends that building and renovating juvenile correctional facilities, and recruiting more qualified Psychologists and forensic experts in custodial facilities of correctional centers to implement gender-based criminogenic-needs-based interventions, is crucial and important in Nigeria*

**Keywords:** Criminogenic Needs; Custodial Juvenile Offenders; Correctional Facilities; Criminogenic Risks of Re-Offending; Gender-Based Interventions; and Rehabilitation.

## Introduction

According to the World Prison Brief (2014), Over 1.7% of the total prison population in Nigeria is classified as juveniles, minors, or young prisoners. Official figures from the National Bureau of Statistics and Nigerian Correctional Service (2017) reported that 446 persons in 2015 and 309 persons in 2016 under 16 years of age were admitted into Nigerian correctional facilities. Additionally, 14,204 persons in 2015 and 13, 659 persons in 2016 between 16 – 20 years of age were also admitted. Human rights violations and unsupportive environments are endemic factors that demoralize rather than help juvenile inmates in Nigeria challenge criminogenic needs that predispose them to re-offending. Evidence has greatly supported the perspective that reducing recidivism rates is possible through the treatment or rehabilitation of offenders rather than just applying punishment. Hence, criminogenic needs have become a target for intervention strategies focus around the globe (Ward & Stewart, 2010).

Criminogenic needs, dynamic risks as conceptualized in some studies, are defined as "factors in an offender's life that are directly related to recidivism" (Office of Court Services, Indiana State Government, 2022). Significant criminogenic needs/risks that may dispose of criminal conduct include procriminal associates, dysfunctional personality, history of antisociality, family circumstances, poor educational/financial achievements, procriminal attitude, values, and beliefs (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2005). Studies have documented the importance of adopting criminogenic needs/risk assessment strategies in the rehabilitation and support of juvenile offenders ( Basanta et al., 2018; Gearhart & Tucker, 2020; Segeren et al., 2020). Basanta et al. (2018) specified that aligning rehabilitation and services with criminogenic needs/dynamic risks assessment benefits higher-risk offenders more than low-risk ones. Perhaps, the focus of implementing a needs assessment is to reduce the risk of re-offending in vulnerable persons, especially at-risk young ones.

The Risk-Need-Responsivity model was adopted as a theoretical framework to understand the dynamics of risks and factors that are role players in the status of offender and re-offender in juveniles. As highlighted in the risk-need-responsivity model (Andrews et al., 2006), juvenile criminal behaviour is directly associated with

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criminogenic risks and needs. The model's need principle promotes that the correctional treatment of juvenile delinquency should be based on criminogenic needs. This model posits that criminogenic needs are dynamic risk factors of criminal behavior that can be altered to reduce the risk of offending, unlike static risks factor that only increases the risk of offending. The central proposition of the model's need principle is that understanding re-offending risks requires a structured assessment of criminogenic needs/dynamic risk factors (Andrews et al., 2006). In addition, the responsivity principle of the model argues that cognitive social learning interventions are the most effective in reducing criminal tendencies in juvenile offenders.

Studies in the west and other parts of the world have reported several significant numbers of criminogenic needs that are most likely to influence a juvenile offender's risk of re-offending. However, cross-cultural perspectives in criminology posit that criminogenic needs are diverse across cultures and directly associated with the unique micro and macro problems in the context of every culture (Olver et al., 2014; Schmidt et al., 2018; Strauss-Hughes., 2019). In Nigeria, researchers have documented significant risks and needs that are profound in predicting juvenile recidivism. Most importantly, these risks and needs are factors that are estimated to be a product of everyday societal challenges both at the community, family, and individual levels.

Researchers have documented some psychosocial and psychopathological risks, or pre-incarceration criminogenic needs as conceptualized in the current study, among incarcerated children and adolescents in Nigeria (Bella et al., 2010; Atilola et al., 2018). A descriptive survey of juvenile offenders at an Ibadan remand home indicated a high risk for re-offending given the challenges in formal education, social care, and protection service (Bella et al., 2010). Identified pre-incarceration criminogenic needs that promoted juvenile criminal acts include separation from parents or caregivers, family dysfunction, sexual and physical abuse from caregivers, and improper formal education (Bella et al., 2010). Additionally, homelessness and poverty have been reported to be common pre-incarceration criminogenic needs identified in juveniles and youths in Nigerian correctional centers (Atilola, 2012a; Atilola, 2012b; Atilola et al., 2018; Atilola et al., 2017).

Key stakeholders (e.g., Police, correctional, legislature, lawyers, judiciary, remand homes, borstal institutions, Psychologists and welfare officers) in the juvenile justice system across the six geopolitical zones strongly agreed in a structured interview survey that pre-incarceration criminogenic needs such as substance use, violent films, parental laxity, socioeconomic background, peer relations, child abuse, and domestic violence, etc., are factors that influence engagement in criminal offenses and re-offending in juveniles (Mustapha, 2016). Most significant in major states is the stalled access to proper formal education in juvenile remand homes,

approved schools, and borstal institutions (Ogunniran, 2014; Lanshima, 2021).

Furthermore, problematic parental alcohol use has been identified as a critical need/risk that promotes criminal tendencies in children. As reported in the randomized controlled study, juvenile respondents in a Borstal institution in Ilorin indicated a history of parental alcohol use (Kuranga, 2013). The report also demonstrated that children raised by single parents are more likely to commit criminal offenses or re-offend, revealing single parenthood as a critical criminogenic need for juveniles to commit crimes and re-offend (Kuranga, 2013).

Before detention and conviction, juvenile criminogenic needs associated with an offense committed are nurtured in homes, peer relations, and other macro segments of society outside of the prison environments (Bella et al. 2010). However, based on the perspectives of some researchers, the criminogenic needs that push convicted Nigerian juveniles to become recidivists are groomed in the conditions of the correctional facilities (Sarki et al., 2018). More criminogenic needs are created in Borstal institutions and remand homes due to the abuses and harshness from correctional officers, worsening the risk of re-offending in the juveniles and counteracting the rehabilitation programs. A report by the National Agency for the Control of Aids, Nigerian Prison Service, and UNODC (2019) indicated that there are incidences of sexual violence, psychological violence, and physical violence among students in Kwara state, Ogun state, and Kaduna state borstals at a prevalence rate of 30%, 60%, and 52% respectively. In addition, drug abuse is also a common phenomenon in these borstals, where the drugs most commonly used include cannabis, codeine, and tramadol (National Agency for the Control of Aids, Nigerian Prison Service, & UNODC, 2019).

Other investigators' reports show that strict restrictions utilized on adult correctional facilities are also employed in remand homes and borstal institutions, developing feelings of incarceration and isolation in juveniles and translating to the negligence of emotional and interpersonal needs of juvenile inmates by correctional facilities in Nigeria (Auwalu et al., 2016). As a standard method of improvisation in most states in Nigeria, juvenile offenders have to be moved to adult correctional facilities due to inadequate borstal institutions and remand homes, exposing the children to novel criminogenic needs capable of increasing risks of recidivism during and after their time in the correctional centers (Auwalu et al., 2016).

Based on the empirical studies reviewed, there is a significant gap in the literature on juvenile criminogenic needs in Nigeria, especially in southeast Nigeria. Most studies have only focused on borstals, remand homes, and approved schools in Nigeria's northern and southwest regions. Perhaps, the social and ecological phenomenon in these regions is unique and cannot be relied on to understand the circumstances of juvenile delinquency in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Moreover, the only three borstal institutions in Nigeria are

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in Kwara state, Ogun state, and Kaduna state, posing a severe risk of abuse and violence for convicted juveniles transferred to adult correctional facilities for their sentence in the southeastern region, which is the focus of this study setting. Hence, the current study seeks to carry out a descriptive assessment of criminogenic needs/risks in incarcerated juveniles in Awka area correctional centers and Enugu area correctional centers. The present study assessments will be aimed at finding answers to the following research question: What are the criminogenic needs in juvenile inmates in the Awka and Enugu area correctional facilities that facilitate risks of recidivism, and what are the gender differential effects?

## Research Method

Juvenile inmates in Awka area correctional centers and Enugu area correctional centers were sampled using a purposive sampling technique. A total sample size of 43 eligible juvenile inmates was recruited for the current study, with 21 sampled from Awka area correctional center and 22 selected from Enugu area correctional center. The majority of the sampled juveniles were males, who were 31 (71%); while females were 12 (29%). The maximum age was 18 years, and the minimum was 12 years old. The inclusion criteria includes those who were below the age of 18 years old, a juvenile awaiting trial, a juvenile convicted, and those who voluntarily want to participate. Of the samples, 15 (34.9%) have been previously incarcerated, while 28 (65.1%) have not been incarcerated but were awaiting trail. Other socio-demographic distributions were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Sample socio-demographic and forensic characteristics (n = 43).*

| Characteristics | *n*(%) |
|---|---|
| Gender | |
| Male | 31(71) |
| Female | 12(29) |
| Ethnicity | |
| Igbo | 38(88.4) |
| Hausa | 1(2.3) |
| Igala | 4(9.3) |
| Educational level | |
| Junior Secondary school | 15(34.9) |
| Senior secondary school | 9(20.9) |
| Primary School | 19(44.2) |
| Reason for Incarceration | |
| *Conduct disorder /Delinquent cause* | |
| Murder | 5(11.6) |
| Theft and robbery | 16(37.2) |
| Drug use | 10(23.3) |
| Sexual offense | 6(14.0) |

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| | |
|---|---|
| *Non- conduct disorder/Non-delinquent cause* | |
| Public loitering | 2(4.7) |
| Public disturbance | 4(9.3) |
| Prior incarceration | |
| Yes | 15(34.9) |
| No | 28(65.1) |

*Note: All juveniles are supervised under custodial sentences*

## Instruments

### Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory

The Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) developed by Hoge and Andrews (2003) is an assessment tool used to assess criminogenic needs/risks, identify treatment targets, and inform case management to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. Part 1 of the YLS/CMI contains 42 items scored as present (1) or absent (0). Items are summed in Part 2 to calculate a total score for each of the eight criminogenic needs (prior offenses, family/parenting, education/ employment, companions, drugs/alcohol, leisure/recreation, personality/behavior, attitudes/orientation). Items are also added to generate a total score for custodial inmates, which is then classified into one of four risk classifications: low (0–19), medium (20–29), high (30–36), and very high (37–42). The YLS/ CMI demonstrates high predictive accuracy for young offenders (Andrews et al., 2012; Schwalbe, 2008). Additionally, there is strong evidence for internal consistency, interrater reliability, and predictive accuracy of the YLS/CMI in both males and females and with ethnic minorities (Olver et al., 2009; Olver et al., 2012).

## Procedure and Data Analysis

The ethics approval letter for the current study was obtained from the Research Ethics Board of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. A letter of consent approval was also obtained from the office of deputy comptrollers at Awka area and Enugu area correctional facilities. Additionally, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund) supported the current study.

The first week of the study was executed in Awka area correctional center, while the second week was executed in Enugu area correctional center. All the juvenile inmates were briefed on the study's objective, and those who became eligible were interviewed and assessed. Information from supervisors and accessible record files were also obtained for relevant checklists in the assessment tool. Consent to participate were obtained from the juveniles, and they were informed that they could withdraw at any point. At the end of the survey period, confectionary food incentives were distributed to every juvenile inmate, including non-participants.

The SPSS version 28 was used for every data analysis in the current study. A descriptive approach was adopted using means and standard deviations analysis to

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evaluate respondents' criminogenic needs/risks scores in the YLS/ CMI tool.

**Presentation of Result**

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the YLS/CMI scores on criminogenic needs/risks. The result indicates that the total sample has a mean score of 30.84 (SD=9.2) on the criminogenic needs/risks and falls within the high-risk classification (30–36), indicating that the general sample of juvenile inmates has a high level of needs/risks that promote vulnerability to re-offending. The standard deviations of the total criminogenic needs/risks were quite large, indicating a high variation between the juvenile inmates on the YLS/CMI measure. The male samples (M=32.8, SD= 9.23) have a mean total score on the criminogenic needs/risks that falls within the high-risk classification (30–36). In contrast, the mean score of the female sample (M=28.9, SD=9.17) falls within the moderate-risk classification. The male juvenile inmates have higher mean scores on 7 domains of the criminogenic needs/risks – prior offenses (M=3.98, SD= 1.02), employment/education (M=5.32, SD= 1.22), peer relations (M=3.40, SD= 1.19), substance use (M=3.05, SD= 1.01), leisure/recreation (M=2.01, SD= 1.42), dysfunctional personality/behavior (M=5.44, SD= 1.22), and procriminal attitude/orientation (M=4.02, SD= 1.24) than females (see Table 2). However, female juvenile inmates only have a higher mean score than males in the family/parenting domain (M=32.8, SD= 9.23). Male juvenile inmates' mean scores on all the domains except peer relations fall within the high risk/needs level classification for each specific domain; meanwhile, females juvenile inmate mean scores on only family circumstances/parenting and education/employment domains fall within the high risk/needs level classification (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics on Criminogenic needs for the Overall Sample and as a Function of Gender*

| | Total Samples | | Male Samples | | Female Samples | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measure | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| *YLS/CMI Subscales* | | | | | | |
| Prior offenses/Dispositions | 3.11 | 1.22 | 3.98 | 1.02 | 2.23 | 1.41 |
| Family circumstances /parenting | 5.60 | 1.12 | 5.54 | 0.91 | 5.67 | 1.32 |
| Employment/education | 5.17 | 1.25 | 5.32 | 1.22 | 5.02 | 1.27 |
| Peer relations | 3.36 | 1.09 | 3.40 | 1.19 | 3.32 | 0.98 |
| Substance use | 2.63 | 1.04 | 3.05 | 1.01 | 2.20 | 1.07 |

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| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leisure/recreation | 1.99 | 1.08 | 2.01 | 1.42 | 1.97 | 0.73 |
| Dysfunctional Personality/behavior | 5.15 | 1.13 | 5.44 | 1.22 | 4.86 | 1.03 |
| Procriminal Attitudes/orientation | 3.84 | 1.30 | 4.02 | 1.24 | 3.65 | 1.36 |
| Total score | 30.84 | 9.20 | 32.76 | 9.23 | 28.92 | 9.17 |

*Note: All juveniles are supervised under custodial sentences*

**Discussion**

Adopting a cross-sectional descriptive study, the current study examined the criminogenic needs/risks among incarcerated juveniles in Awka and Enugu areas correctional custodial centers using the YLS/CMI. Based on the results obtained, the juvenile inmates at Awka area correctional facility and Enugu area correctional facility have a very high degree of criminogenic needs and risks that renders them vulnerable to re-offending. This finding implies that there are underlying explicit and implicit factors in the social and personal aspects of the juveniles' lives that are disrupted, challenging, problematic, and traumatic, enhancing criminogenic impulses and promoting punishable delinquency behaviors. Evidence in Nigeria shows that juveniles in borstal institutions, remand homes, approved schools, and adult correctional facilities are at risk of re-offending given the deplorable conditions that worsen the criminogenic risks/need and nurture more delinquent behaviors (Auwalu et al., 2016; Lanshima, 2021; Mustapha, 2016; Ogunniran, 2014). Conditions in these juvenile correctional environments, including poor educational facility, drug abuse, physical and sexual abuse, violence, lack of social support, and isolation, are instead risk factors that surface pre-incarceration needs that pushed them initially into criminal behaviors (National Agency for the Control of Aids, Nigerian Prison Service, & UNODC, 2019; Sarki et al., 2018; Atilola et al., 2018), contrasting the expectations from correctional centers to rehabilitate and integrate into society.

Furthermore, the current study also found that males have higher criminogenic needs/risks than females, and fall within high-risk classifications for re-offending, unlike females, who were moderately at risk. Cross-cultural evidence has shown that male juveniles have a higher risk of recidivism due to factors such as family support, parental criminal history, peer deviance, and substance use (Conrad et al., 2014). Although results from the current study show that male juvenile inmates in these institutions were significantly at- risk of re-offending, split-group gender observations show that females were highly at risk of re-offending due to the criminogenic needs of unhealthy family and parenting environment and history of prior offenses. Supporting evidence shows that parental and family violence, neglect, and sexual abuse are greater significant predictors of recidivism in female juveniles and young females than in males (Thompson et al., 2004; Conrad et al., 2014). Based on these

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findings, the current suggests the building and renovation of juvenile correctional facilities in the southeast region to create a safe space for effective rehabilitative interventions. The government should recruit sufficient qualified forensic experts to implement criminogenic-needs based interventions in juvenile populations in adult correctional centers, borstals, remand homes, and approved schools.

Few limitations were encountered in the course of this study. Firstly, the study only focused on the criminogenic needs of juvenile inmates and did not include an assessment of the correctional officers and the juvenile facilities. Secondly, the study's small sample size might have impacted the juvenile samples' valid summary of criminogenic risks/needs. Lastly, the study only covered two states in the southeast, invalidating attempts to generalize the findings to other southeast states not included. Future studies should endeavor to use larger samples, ensure diversity in culture and regions, and assess the conditions of juvenile correctional facilities.

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