

Beyond Spouses' Imprisonment: Expectations of Non-incarcerated Female Partners of Inmates at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan Medium Correctional Facility

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look into the connection between unmet needs and the effects they have on non-incarcerated partners. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with female spouses of incarcerated individuals at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility. The study evaluated the lived experiences of ten participants using Satir's personal iceberg metaphor model as the theory and an interpretative phenomenology approach. Based on the research objectives, the study indicates that the participants' own expectations, as well as those of their spouses, as well as unmet expectations from their support system and society, have a significant impact on the effects of their partners' incarceration on them. The report provides policymakers, specialists, religious leaders, and community leaders with recommendations.

Keywords: *Incarceration, lived experiences, personal-iceberg, phenomenology, support system*

1.0 Introduction

Expectations are what individuals are disgruntled about if they do not have them. Some reports established that expectations of oneself and others influence congruence (Loosen et al., 2020; Voorn et al., 2021). There is also a significant link between unmet expectations and congruency. So and Costigan (2021) concluded that expectations firmly influence and shape decision-making processes. Expectations also influence how confidence, trust, attachment, and differences of opinion in relationships are viewed and addressed (Koltz, 2021). Human expectations tend to control the cognitive form of connectivity between individuals or systems (Kaynan & Wade, 2018). Thus, this investigation has assumed that partners' incarceration could alter the expectations of the non-incarcerated partner, which in turn can lead to frustration and an incongruent stance (Voorn et al., 2021). For instance, Bekiroğlu et al. (2022) report suggests that the personal expectations of some prisoners' wives caused them to develop certain coping stances. Some mothers in the study, for example, stayed strong for their children, while others decided to commit to never being alone. This greatly assisted them in dealing with the consequences of their partners' incarceration (Bekiroğlu et al., 2022).

Parenting becomes more challenging for the spouse at home when one of the parents is absent. For instance, when their dads are imprisoned, the children get outraged (Skinner-Osei & Levenson, 2018). It has been reported that disorders such as anxiety and depression, aggression

and behavioural concerns, and other health issues such as developmental delays and speech difficulties may impact children whose fathers are incarcerated (Turney, 2014). This makes parenting difficult for moms who are struggling financially and coping with the misbehaviour of their children. On the other hand, children of incarcerated mothers have a high likelihood of entering the foster care system if co-parenting is not provided (Crockett & Gibby, 2021). Non-incarcerated partners constantly expect their imprisoned spouses actively participate in co-parenting from behind bars (Tadros et al., 2021).

Furthermore, non-incarcerated partners want their significant others in custody to honour their relationship while they are in custody (Tadros & Vlach, 2022). According to Martins et al. (2018), female companions of the incarcerated in Latin America were concerned when they contracted sexually transmitted diseases during conjugal visitations with their husbands. With non-incarcerated partners, unfulfilled expectations influence their poor physical or mental health (Patterson et al., 2021). It also leads to the relationship's demise (Comfort, 2016; Turney & Halpern-Meehin, 2021). Likewise, a study conducted in Malaysia by binti Abd Aziz et al. (2022) reported that prisoners' wives expected their partners to respect their feelings and predicaments.

In the same way, society might have failed the non-incarcerated partners who had hoped that society would and realize the burden their spouses' imprisonment had placed on them (Paynter et al., 2022; Rennie & Crewe, 2023). When the society that is meant to be looking for them becomes hostile and critical, they get apprehensive (Bryan, 2022; Cannito & Mercuri, 2022). Sumpter et al. (2021) suggested that extremist incarcerated individuals in Indonesia tended to refuse reintegration into society while their non-incarcerated partners were subjected to stigmatization and humiliation by both society and their places of work. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the ability to balance oneself with significant others and the context may result in the birth of a more promising future.

The Satir model and interpretative phenomenology approach (IPA) were used to investigate respondents' lived experiences. The Satir Model observes that beneath the observable behaviours are underlying attributes such as expectations. According to Satir et al. (1991), reactions and observable communication stances can be expressed in five ways: blaming, placating, super-reasonable, irrelevant, and congruent; the latter balances self with others and context (Koltz, 2021). On the other hand, the analytic opportunity provided by Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology approach (IPA) enabled the researchers to delve beyond the question "what" (i.e., the effects of the participants' partners' incarceration on them). For instance, Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology and its emphasis on "being in" and "self and world" (Smith et al., 2012) also enabled the researchers to connect with the respondents and have an accurate interpretation based on the data provided on "how" and "why" they were affected by the imprisonment of their partners. These foundations assisted the researchers in better understanding and supplementing the Satir theory used in the study. As a result, the researchers were able to mix and analyse ideas to demonstrate how shared characteristics, designs, and components fit together to provide a coherent point for discussion and interpretation. It also aided in the development of an informed judgment of the notion by giving a variety of perspectives.

2.0 Methodology

Study Purpose and Design

The study explored Satir's personal iceberg metaphor to unravel the significance of non-incarcerated partners' expectations. The study also used an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) to truly capture the participants' lived experiences and investigate why and how they experienced the unmet expectations

Instruments and Procedures

Face-to-face personal interviews were used to collect qualitative data for the study. They were semi-structured and flexible. In this study, interviews designed to interpret the meanings of central themes in the lived world of the ten participants were employed. No interview exceeded one hour within the Agodi-Ibadan corrections facility. The researchers also required the service of a competent research informant who was not only facilitated the research along with the researchers but who also served as a "check and balance" with whom the researchers periodically compared notes. This feat was employed to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hennink et al., 2020; Walliman, 2018).

Samples and Participants

Ten females who have had romantic relationships with their incarcerated partners and also visited them at Nigeria's Agodi-Ibadan medium correctional facility participated in this study and were purposively sampled. Their ages range from 30 to 68. The lowest education was a primary school certificate, while the highest was a master's degree. Two of the respondents were salary or wage earners, and eight of them engaged in personal businesses.

Data Analysis

The researchers coded each synopsis with concise, textual, and thematic analysis following the six steps suggested by Larkin et al. (2021). In each text, comments were made on themes and patterns, which were streamlined by looking for similarities and links in them to establish which contributed to the overall interpretation. Concepts have been analysed collaboratively in order to identify patterns among respondents and establish an ultimate set of themes as each participant's excerpt is evaluated. The significance of this is that it allows the IPA's inherent ritual of double hermeneutic commitment, which encourages moving back and forth to grasp the meaning intended by each participant as well as juxtaposing those to optimize a detailed understanding of both the transcripts and the interpretations. Coding and theme development were handled by the researchers. The research team members, coordinated by the team leader, discussed the study regularly to ensure that the analysis sustained its roots in the transcripts.

3.0 Findings

As seen in Figure 1, the non-incarcerated individuals in the study projected personal desires throughout their partners' incarceration. They also had certain expectations of their incarcerated companions, despite the fact that they were behind bars. Furthermore, they not only expressed clearly what they expected from their support system, but they also had precise expectations for society as a whole.

Personal Expectations

“It is paramount that I think outside the box as me and be me to take care of myself” (P. 01).

“I must avoid the third death because I might not wake up from it. That is a task for me” (P. 02).

“I hope not to disappoint myself; I would like to be a good wife and be able to stand by my husband throughout this trying period” (P. 04).

“My husband's incarceration has made me take on obligations and roles for which I was not prepared. For instance, children expect me to provide food for them, cloth them, visit

their school on "open day" and do their school assignments with them. I will not let them down" (P. 06).

"If I want to maintain my sanity, I should leave it to the people. I should also admit the condition of my husband. I am the one to manage myself. I should accept my fate and live with it. I should live each day at a time" (P. 07).

"Standing by my husband is not conditional. I must stand by him, come rain or shine. Whatever support I give my husband is not about him; I do whatever for God. I hope that I will laugh best if I brace up. My self-esteem is zero now, from my point of view, not how people assess me. I know I am anxious, and I have high blood pressure. I was also warned that depression may set it off. I hope that I will be able to put the incarceration of my husband behind me so that I can be healthy physically and mentally. This is the path I should take now, and I also hope to build my self-worth" (P. 08).

"I should upgrade myself to a state that prepares my children for the future" (P. 09).

Expectations of Non-incarcerated Partners of Their Incarcerated Partners

"I also look forward to my husband understanding the shame and stigma his incarceration has brought on me and cleaning up his mess rather than pleading with me to be patient and courageous" (P. 01).

"I expected that he would have believed me when I said the child died. The pain he caused me when he doubted me was much more than the one he caused me when the police took him away from our wedding reception" (P. 02).

"I simply want my husband to continue to be the good man he has always been. I would be disappointed if he joined the bad gang while in custody" (P.03).

"I just trust that he will not disappoint me. I also hope he is telling me the truth. I hope he will maintain his statement and that his claim of innocence will be vindicated" (P.04).

"Mnnnnnn. My husband always desires that I visit. I would want him to realise I can't come here empty-handed" (P.06).

"Meanwhile, I hope that my husband will appreciate my efforts and stop receiving multiple female visitors in the yard. This demoralizes me. If he does not want me to tell anyone about his situation except his mother, brother, and three friends, it is expected of him that he should not let any female visit him in the yard" (P.07).

"I sincerely desire that he stop seeing himself as an incapacitated prisoner" (P.08).

"I hope my husband will use his brain to get himself out of this place before he loses his home. I expect him to use his network of friends, businesses, and relatives to track down the culprit, who was last found 731 kilometers away" (P.09).

"I expect him to leave me and my daughter alone. This would relieve me of the burden his imprisonment imposed on me. I understand that he looks forward to reliving our relationship. What? That would not happen" (P10).

Negotiating for Family Support

"How I truly desire my friends and family to be aware that I require additional assistance in transporting provisions to my husband at the correctional facility and caring for our child" (P.03).

"People around me are not supportive. Rather than encouraging and assisting to facilitate the release of my husband, they desert me and call me names that do not belong to me. The actions of my husband's relatives, the younger and older brothers, and sisters, are disheartening" (P.04).

"My family and friends abandoned me when I needed them most. I am all by myself. I am a stench to everybody, including my husband's relatives. Everybody has either avoided or kept a distance from me" (P.05).

"I had expected that people would rally around me to assist in securing the release of my husband, but instead they have left me to fate" (P.06).

"How I earnestly desire that the community of friends show some concern and reciprocity. If someone has laid his back for them in the past, courtesy demands that they reciprocate the gesture" (P.08).

"His associates, who are from his region, should support him when they know he is innocent rather than abandon him to rot in jail. They do not care how the children fare, even when they are out of school for three years" (P.09).

Excitement to Put an End to Society's Hostility

"The fact that society is isolating me is extremely harmful, but it exempts me from any unnecessary levy to contribute to or support associates. I expect that they will mind their business and leave me alone" (P.03).

"Some are asking me to abandon him after I have lived 30 years with him. That is nonsensical. I expect them to be emotional. All I want them to do is get him out of jail. He has been in custody for one and a half years. I do not expect anyone in their right sense to think absconding from my husband is the only option. I expect them to understand this while they consider that I am stubborn" (P.05).

"Honestly, I do not expect society to change; I am the one to concentrate on what matters to me. Marketers do not concentrate on the surrounding noises; rather, they concentrate on whom they transact business with" (P.07).

"Society has seriously disappointed me. That hurts me. They have judged my family while the judgment has not passed. They stigmatise me and my child. They perceive me as guilty as my husband. I didn't expect this. To them, all our wealth is ill-gotten" (P.08).

"Even though they are bound by their cultural worldview to view prisoners as a disgrace to their friends, children, spouses, parents, and community, the community should have exonerated me as an individual, having known that my husband had lived in the community as law-abiding and that he was innocent" (P.09).

"I do not expect society to change its attitude towards social stigma against me. This myopic behaviour will dwindle with time. Society will not expect that we will be together after he has been in custody, having understood his antecedents" (P. 10).

4.0 Discussion

In the extract above, it is noted that when spouses are imprisoned, participants' relationship commitment is reduced, their roles of responsibility are altered, and their psychological and

social conditions are impacted. To this end, participants' physical, emotional, mental, marital, parental, and financial states are affected by their partners' incarceration. The results support the assumption of the study that non-incarcerated partners' expectations may affect the effects that their partners' incarceration has on them. They also support the claim that participants' physical and mental health (Patterson et al., 2021), interpersonal relationships with partners and society (Nickels, 2020), and parenting capacity were at risk (Tadros et al., 2021). Furthermore, the results did not only support Bekiroğlu et al.'s (2022) study, which found that the personal expectations of prison wives helped them manage, but they also concur with that of So and Costigan (2021), who came to the conclusion that expectations have a significant impact on and shape the decision-making process. The findings are also in consonance with Koltz (2021) and Kaynan and Wade (2018), who show expectations as impacting confidence, trust, attachment, and differences of opinion in addition to managing the cognitive form of connectedness between people or systems.

In addition to the financial and societal repercussions of incarceration, the non-incarcerated partners' sample demonstrated a decline in some fundamental interpersonal relations between participants and their incarcerated partners. The specifics showed the participants' sincere demands on their partners. The expectations of the participants from their incarcerated partners, which revolved around finances, trust, caution, and their pre-incarceration relationships, are clear indicators of the effects of incarceration on their relationships and socioeconomic situation. The results support the findings of Loosen et al. (2020) and Voorn et al. (2021), who discovered that unmet expectations of self and others influence congruence and, as a result, dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, one of the main effects of incarceration the participant experienced was on the family-sociocultural relationship. The friends and family alienated them by using their control over the economy and culture. For instance, the participants' earlier mutual trust and friendship with their support systems have been impacted by their partners' incarceration. It has also made parenting a difficult task. Hence, the result shows that the participants had specific wishes for their estranged friends, families, and loved ones during their partners' incarceration. According to the study's findings, non-incarcerated partners' family and friends who served as support systems became estranged from them, which impacted them negatively. This claim supports Oyekola's (2018) recommendation that non-incarcerated partners' support systems be encouraged to address their financial and emotional needs to lessen the impact of their partners' incarceration.

In the same vein, due to their partners' incarceration, non-incarcerated partners experienced social isolation. Their experiences during their partner's incarceration had a significant impact on their freedom. They expressed what they expected society to do to alleviate the burden. From the foregoing, it is clear that, while some participants expected society to turn a new leaf, others believe that society is wired to function in this manner and that they do not expect any change. This study supports Olusola and Temitope's (2020) findings that social stigma affects non-incarcerated partners, families, and prisoners' friends. The findings also back up Bradshaw and Muldoon's (2020) accounts of encounters with a relative's imprisonment as a source of social detachment; encounters with a relative's detention as a source of being classified as "criminals"; and relatives as victims of the imprisonment phenomenon.

The Agodi-Ibadan Medium Correctional Facility, formerly known as the Agodi Prisons, which houses inmates with diverse political, social, educational, and marital backgrounds, served as the study site. This correctional facility was chosen because of its strategic location in southwestern Nigeria and the cultural viewpoint that death is preferable to the shame and

stigma of imprisonment (Aluko-Arowolo et al., 2020; Olayinka & Alonge, 2021). Despite the fact that in Yoruba culture, marriage is essentially a relationship that extends beyond the nuclear family and entails all individuals, including close relatives and the community at large, where such stakeholders provide physical, divine, virtuous, and financial help, such community connectedness has a connotation of expectation from every member (Oladokun & Olatunji, 2022; Oresanya & Adebisi, 2021). Furthermore, family in the Yoruba context encompasses not just the man, his wife, and their families but also community members, according to Okogie's (2019) study. Non-incarcerated partners are sometimes seen as collaborators with their incarcerated partners in the same way.

The expectations of the participants in this study were based on their perceived social stigma, loss of friends and associates, or lack of sympathy from society (Kotova, 2020; Labani, 2018). According to Familusi (2012), even though they are the breadwinners for their families, participants such as Yoruba women may be disadvantaged by patriarchal cultural standards (Akanle et al., 2018). Although Muraina and Ajmátanraj (2022) portrayed female gender positively, enhancing women's efficacy, gender rights may have been limited to their responsibilities in Yorùbá communal and cultural life (Ademiluka, 2021; Olomjobi & Yerima, 2022). The underlying perceptions have driven the participants' expectations, fury, and bluffs in response to society's "antics."

Furthermore, despite many statutory and judicial measures to avoid such marginalisation, women continue to believe they exist, according to Aiyetoro and Amarachukwu (2022), and Baraje (2021). As a result, while their partners were incarcerated, the participants expected their support systems and society to accept them. The participants' decision to keep their efforts to themselves is an incongruent coping posture after being downsized and unnoticed in a society where maleness is enthroned and feminine perspectives are always spurned (Afolayan, 2021).

However, one of Satir's models' main goals is to empower participants to make decisions rather than be dissatisfied with unmet expectations. She contended that everyone who lives on the edge of consciousness tends to tilt towards freedom and a happier life. This is because such a person feels confident in their capacity to make sound decisions. Satir believed that each person was solely responsible for his or her own personal experiences (Satir, 1988). She believed that inside experiences trumped anything she had ever felt, perceived, expected, or desired. Instead of placating, complaining, or blaming others or events for failed expectations, Satir believes that an individual's internal reality should be empowered to develop a congruent and fulfilling personality (Satir, 1988; Satir et al., 1991).

Furthermore, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological technique (IPA) enabled the researchers to get beyond the question of "what" (i.e., the impacts of the participants' partners' incarceration on them). For example, Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology and its emphasis on "being in" and "self and world" (Mhatre & Mehta, 2023; Smith, 2012) enabled the researchers to connect with the respondents and have an accurate interpretation based on the data provided on "how" and "why" their partners' imprisonment impacted their expectations. These foundations helped the researchers grasp and augment the Satir theory used in the investigation. As a result, the researchers were able to combine and analyse concepts to show how similar features, designs, and components fit together to create a coherent point for discussion and interpretation. It also contributed to the formation of an informed opinion of the concept by providing a diversity of perspectives.

Table 1. Tabular Presentation of Theme: Expectations

Sub-theme:	P.01	P.02	P.03	P.04	P.05	P.06	P.07	P.08	P.09	P.10
Personal Expectation	*	*		*		*	*	*		*
Expectation from Partner	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
Expectations from a support system			*	*	*	*		*	*	
Expectation from Society			*		*		*	*	*	*

5.0 Conclusion

The investigation may have added to our knowledge from studies on non-incarcerated partners' expectations and their effects. However, future research should keep in mind that the Satir model and interpretative phenomenology approach were used to investigate respondents' lived experiences. More research is needed in this area to investigate the lived experience of non-incarcerated partners using different models and methodologies in different contexts and across larger populations. This would yield excellent results. Despite this, the study discovered that participants' expectations influenced their lived experience of incarceration. Each of the four expectations influenced the participants: 1. personal expectations; 2. partner expectations; 3. support system expectations; and 4. societal expectations. The findings revealed that participants' commitment to their relationships decreased, and their psychological and social situations were affected by their spouses' incarceration. As a result, participants' spouses' incarceration has an impact on their physical, emotional, mental, marital, parental, and financial situations. Data showed a reduction in interpersonal ties between participants and their incarcerated partners, in addition to the negative effects of incarceration on the participants' finances, support systems, and social standing.

6.0 Recommendations

The study, therefore, recommends that couple counselors intensify psychoeducation through workshops and seminars among the non-incarcerated partners experiencing emotional trauma and between both the non-incarcerated and their incarcerated partners where issues raised about faithfulness, co-parenting, and finances by the non-incarcerated partners could be amicably resolved. It further recommends that marriage and family therapists should work with non-incarcerated partners, their support systems, and community members to alleviate non-incarcerated partners' unmet expectations. The study suggests that if the perception, shame, and stigmatisation from the support system abated, the self-esteem of the non-incarcerated partners would be high, and much of the consequence of their partner's incarceration could be alleviated. Furthermore, the study recommends that the community leaders should reawaken the community to reignite the afrocultural community principles that reflect the Yoruba worldview and regard family as the tiniest yet a most underpinning component of society. This is because the Yoruba community has never thrown away a baby with bath water; therefore, the community must and recognize the sanctity of communal life despite its members' incarceration.

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