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The Role of Psychology in Shaping Holistic Criminal Justice Administration in Nigeria: From Profiling to Rehabilitation

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Abstract

The role of psychology in the criminal justice administration system is pivotal, influencing various aspects from understanding criminal behaviour to shaping rehabilitation strategies. This article explores the multifaceted contributions of psychology within the criminal justice context. From criminal profiling to analysing behavioural patterns, psychologists provide valuable insights for law enforcement agencies to help in the identification and apprehension of suspects, contributing to the overall efficacy of criminal investigations. In the courtroom, forensic psychologists serve as expert witnesses, offering evaluations on mental health issues, competency, and culpability. Their assessments assist judges and juries in making informed decisions about sentencing, ensuring a fair and just legal process. Moreover, psychology is integral in designing and implementing rehabilitation programs for offenders. Understanding the psychological factors that contribute to criminal behaviour enables the development of targeted interventions aimed at reducing recidivism. The connection of psychology and criminal justice also extends to the treatment of victims and witnesses, addressing the psychological impact of crime and facilitating their participation in legal proceedings. Additionally, psychological research informs policy-making, influencing the development of evidence-based practices that enhance the efficiency and fairness of the criminal justice system. In summary, psychology is an indispensable tool in the criminal justice administration system, fostering a holistic approach that encompasses investigation, adjudication, and rehabilitation.

1. Introduction

The Nigerian criminal justice system stands at a crossroads, grappling with complex issues that demand innovative solutions. In recent years, the integration of psychology into criminal justice administration has emerged as a promising avenue for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by law enforcement, judiciary, and correctional systems. Nigeria, a country characterized by rich tapestry of ethnicities and cultural diversity grapples with distinctive challenges in upholding law and order. The nation's criminal justice

system, a composite of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and correctional facilities, confronts a spectrum of issues spanning from pervasive corruption and resource inadequacies to the imperative for efficacious rehabilitation programs. This multifaceted landscape demands a comprehensive approach, and the integration of psychological principles emerges as a pivotal strategy to comprehensively address these challenges. By investigating into the complexities of human behaviour, motivations, and mental health within the context of criminal activities, psychological insights contribute to understanding that can inform more effective policies and practices. Corruption remains a persistent challenge within Nigeria's criminal justice system, impeding its ability to function with integrity and efficiency. Scholars such as Nwankwo (2015) have highlighted the corrosive impact of corruption on law enforcement agencies, where bribery, nepotism, and unethical practices compromise the pursuit of justice. This not only erodes public trust but also perpetuates a culture of impunity. Addressing corruption requires not only legal measures but also a deeper understanding of the psychological factors that contribute to corrupt practices. Psychological insights can inform interventions that target the root causes of corruption, addressing issues such as low morale, inadequate training, and the ethical dilemmas faced by law enforcement officials.

Furthermore, the inadequacy of resources within the criminal justice system hampers its effectiveness. The works of Odekunle (2017) emphasize the need for substantial investments in infrastructure, training, and technology to enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies. Psychological principles come into play by informing resource allocation strategies that prioritize the mental well-being of law enforcement personnel. High-stress environments, prevalent in the field of law enforcement, can contribute to burnout and compromised decision-making. Implementing psychological support mechanisms, such as counselling services and stress management programs can mitigate these challenges and foster a more resilient and effective criminal justice workforce. Additionally, the demand for effective rehabilitation programs within correctional facilities underscores the importance of psychological principles in the Nigerian context. Scholars like Akande (2018) emphasize the role of psychological interventions in addressing the underlying factors contributing to criminal behaviour. Understanding the motivations and mental health of offenders allows for tailored rehabilitation programs that aim not only to punish but also to rehabilitate. Integrating psychological assessments in the correctional process can inform individualized treatment plans, reducing the likelihood of recidivism and promoting the successful reintegration of individuals into society.

2. Literature Review

Historical Overview of the Nigerian Criminal Justice System

Nigeria, with its rich tapestry of cultures and ethnicities, grapples with the complexities of establishing a robust and equitable criminal justice system. The historical trajectory of the nation, from colonial rule to post-independence governance, has left an indelible mark on its legal framework. This review aims to delve into the present historical context of Nigeria's criminal justice system, examining the enduring legacies of the past and the challenges faced in building a fair and effective system. Within this exploration, particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the role of psychology in shaping and navigating the contemporary criminal justice landscape.

Colonial Legacies and Legal Foundations

The roots of Nigeria's criminal justice system can be traced back to the colonial era, during which the British imposed their legal and administrative structures on the diverse Nigerian societies. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 laid the foundation for a unified legal system, blending British common law with customary law (Yusuf, 2018). The imposition of foreign legal norms, however, created a disjunction between the formal legal system and the indigenous practices that had long governed societal order. The impact of this colonial legacy is evident in the persistent challenges faced by Nigeria's criminal justice system today (Abdulqadir, 2016; Yusuf, 2018). This can be seen as fusion of common law and customary law has resulted in a complex and at times contradictory legal landscape. The coexistence of multiple legal systems has led to jurisdictional conflicts and challenges in reconciling traditional values with modern legal principles. This historical baggage continues to shape the way justice is administered in Nigeria, influencing the attitudes of both legal professionals and the general populace.

Post-Independence Governance and Legal Reforms

The attainment of independence in 1960 marked a new chapter in Nigeria's history, bringing with it aspirations for self-determination and governance. However, the post-independence period was marred by political instability, military coups, and a series of regimes that often-perpetuated human rights abuses. The impact of these turbulent times echoes in the contemporary criminal justice system, manifesting in issues of corruption, impunity, and a strained relationship between law enforcement agencies and the public. The legal reforms initiated in the post-independence era aimed to address some of the systemic challenges inherited from colonial rule. Various administrations have attempted to streamline and modernize the criminal justice system through legislative changes and the establishment of specialized courts (OKEKE, 2021). Despite these efforts, the persistence of challenges such as delays in case adjudication, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure underscore the complexity of reforming a system deeply rooted in historical legacies. Psychology therefore, has a very important role to play in the context of criminal justice administration in Nigeria, given the myriad of challenges bedevilling the system.

Thus, the role of psychology in criminal justice administration in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted area that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. As the Nigerian criminal justice system grapples with challenges such as overcrowded prisons, high rates of recidivism, and a need for more effective crime prevention strategies, the integration of psychological principles and practices has become crucial. The following sections of the review explore the ways in which psychology contributes to and enhances various aspects of criminal justice administration in Nigeria.

3. The role of psychology in criminal justice administration

a. Psychological Assessment in Criminal Justice:

Psychological assessments occupy a crucial position within the sophisticated framework of criminal justice administration, contributing significantly to the understanding and evaluation of offenders. In Nigeria, the application of psychological assessments has become increasingly prevalent in various stages of the criminal justice process, ranging from pre-trial evaluations to risk assessments and sentencing decisions. Okorie's (2018) research underscores the significance of culturally sensitive assessments, emphasizing the need for an approach that considers the unique cultural nuances and context of Nigeria. These assessments provide a comprehensive understanding of an individual's psychological makeup, aiding judicial authorities in making informed decisions and tailoring interventions that are both effective and culturally appropriate. The use of psychological assessments in pre-trial evaluations is instrumental in informing the court about an offender's mental state, competency, and potential risk factors. This phase of the criminal justice process aims to determine whether an individual is mentally fit to stand trial and comprehend the legal proceedings. Research indicates that culturally sensitive assessments during pre-trial evaluations are crucial for accurate diagnosis and appropriate interventions (Okorie, 2018). By considering cultural factors, such as beliefs, values, and social norms, psychologists can provide a more nuanced understanding of an offender's mental health, thereby aiding the court in making just and equitable decisions. The integration of psychological assessments in this early stage ensures that individuals are treated fairly and that their mental health needs are appropriately addressed within the context of the Nigerian legal system.

In the aspects of risk assessments, psychological evaluations contribute significantly to predicting an offender's likelihood of reoffending. This predictive capability is essential for informing sentencing decisions and designing rehabilitation programs tailored to individual needs. Okorie's (2018) research emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity in risk assessments, highlighting that an understanding of cultural factors is vital for accurately assessing an offender's risk of recidivism in the Nigerian context. By incorporating cultural considerations into risk assessments, psychologists can enhance the predictive validity of their evaluations, thereby assisting the criminal justice system in making more informed decisions about sentencing and post-conviction management. This integration of psychological assessments in risk evaluations aligns with international best practices and holds promise for improving the accuracy of predicting recidivism rates in Nigeria (Nnam, Onya, Obi, Ogbonnaya, & Arua, 2021). Moreover, the role of psychological assessments extends beyond individual cases to contribute to broader systemic improvements in criminal justice administration. By analyzing aggregated data from psychological assessments, policymakers and

practitioners can identify patterns and trends related to mental health issues and risk factors within the criminal justice system. This knowledge informs the development of evidence-based policies and interventions aimed at addressing systemic issues and promoting better mental health outcomes for offenders. In this way, psychological assessments serve as a valuable tool for fostering systemic improvements that contribute to a fairer and more effective criminal justice system in Nigeria.

b. Correctional Psychology and Rehabilitation:

One of the key areas where psychology plays a significant role is in the rehabilitation of offenders within the correctional system. Nigerian prisons face challenges such as overcrowding and insufficient resources, making effective rehabilitation programs essential. Psychology occupies a central role in the rehabilitation of offenders within the correctional system, with influence extending into various aspects of the criminal justice process. The application of psychological principles in correctional settings aims to address not only the punitive aspect of incarceration but also the reformation and reintegration of individuals into society. This approach aligns with contemporary perspectives that view rehabilitation as a primary goal of the criminal justice system (Smith & Gendreau, 2019). The challenges faced by Nigerian prisons underscore the urgency of adopting evidence-based psychological interventions to enhance rehabilitation outcomes. Overcrowding, for instance, can contribute to heightened levels of stress and aggression among inmates, creating an environment that hampers the rehabilitation process (Haney, 2018). Implementing cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) programs tailored to the specific needs of incarcerated individuals has demonstrated success in reducing recidivism rates and improving mental health outcomes (Lipsey, Landenberger, & Wilson, 2007). By addressing the underlying factors contributing to criminal behaviour, such as substance abuse or antisocial thinking patterns, psychologists contribute significantly to breaking the cycle of reoffending and fostering a more rehabilitative environment. Furthermore, the scarcity of resources in Nigerian prisons necessitates a strategic allocation of available resources to maximize the impact of rehabilitation programs. Psychologists can play a crucial role in developing cost-effective interventions that yield meaningful results. Collaborative efforts between psychologists and correctional staff can lead to the implementation of targeted educational and vocational training programs, equipping inmates with the skills needed for successful reintegration into society (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). This not only addresses the immediate challenges within the prison system but also aligns with broader societal goals of reducing crime rates and promoting community safety. Studies by Olagunju et al. (2019) highlight the positive impact of psychological interventions in reducing recidivism rates and promoting successful reintegration into society.

c. Forensic Psychology in Criminal Investigations:

Forensic psychology, a branch of psychology that interconnects with the legal system, plays a crucial role in criminal investigations, witness testimony, and victim support. The application of psychological principles in the legal context helps to enhance the understanding of criminal behaviour, ensures the reliability of witness statements, and provides support for victims navigating the complexities of the legal process (Stephens, Ibarra, & Moore, 2005). This branch of psychology plays a crucial role in criminal investigations and the legal process in Nigeria, contributing to the understanding of criminal behaviour, aiding in the assessment of mental states, and providing expert testimony in court. In the Nigerian legal system, the integration of forensic psychology has become increasingly important in addressing the complex interplay between mental health and criminality. According to a study by Olley and Udechukwu (2017), the application of forensic psychology in Nigeria has expanded over the years, with professionals in the field actively participating in criminal investigations, court proceedings, and correctional processes.

One key aspect of forensic psychology in Nigeria is the assessment of criminal behaviour and the determination of mental states. Forensic psychologists employ their expertise to evaluate the mental health of individuals involved in criminal cases, providing insights into potential motives, psychological factors influencing criminal behaviour, and the presence of mental disorders. This assessment is critical for both the investigative and legal phases of criminal proceedings. In the study by Olley and Udechukwu (2017), it is emphasized that understanding the psychological aspects of criminal behaviour is essential for effective law enforcement and the administration of justice in Nigeria. Forensic psychologists collaborate with law enforcement agencies to develop profiles of offenders, assist in suspect interviews, and provide guidance on the psychological aspects of crime scenes. Moreover, forensic psychologists in Nigeria actively contribute to the legal process by offering expert testimony in court. Their testimony can address issues

such as the mental competence of defendants, the credibility of eyewitnesses, and the reliability of confessions. In a country where the legal system is grappling with challenges, including a backlog of cases and resource constraints, the expertise of forensic psychologists becomes invaluable. According to Ogunwobi and Aransiola (2018), the involvement of forensic psychologists in the legal process enhances the quality of evidence presented in court, providing judges and jurors with a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors at play in a given case. This, in turn, contributes to fairer and more informed legal decisions

d. Understanding Criminal Behaviour: the role of psychology

Forensic psychology delves into the intricate workings of the human mind to decipher the motivations and underlying factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. In Nigeria, where a diverse range of socio-economic, cultural, and political factors influence criminal activities, the role of forensic psychology becomes paramount. Scholars like Ogunleye (2016) have emphasized the importance of understanding the socio-cultural context in which criminal acts occur, as this understanding aids in developing effective investigative strategies. Psychological profiling, a technique widely employed in forensic psychology, assists law enforcement agencies in constructing a behavioural and personality profile of potential offenders. This tool has been used successfully in various parts of the world to narrow down suspects and prioritize investigative efforts (Turvey, 2017). Its application in the Nigerian legal system helps investigators to identify patterns in criminal behaviour, contributing to the apprehension and conviction of perpetrators.

e. Enhancing Witness Testimony: the role of psychology

The reliability of witness testimony is often a critical factor in criminal investigations. Memory is fallible, and witnesses may be subject to stress, fear, or manipulation, leading to inaccuracies in their accounts. Forensic psychologists in Nigeria play a pivotal role in assessing the credibility of witness statements, employing techniques such as cognitive interviewing to enhance the accuracy of recall (Omotayo, 2019). Furthermore, forensic psychologists assist in identifying and addressing factors that may impair witness testimony, such as trauma, suggestive questioning, or cultural barriers. In a culturally diverse country like Nigeria, where different ethnic groups may have distinct communication styles and beliefs, understanding these nuances is crucial for effective testimony evaluation (Oluwole, 2018). This nuanced approach ensures that the legal process is fair and that the evidence presented is reliable. In the realm of criminal justice administration in Nigeria, the quality and reliability of witness testimony play a pivotal role in determining the outcome of trials. The Nigerian legal system, like many others, relies heavily on the credibility of witnesses to establish facts and ensure fair adjudication. However, there are notable challenges that hinder the effectiveness of witness testimony, ranging from cultural factors to procedural shortcomings. To address these issues, it is imperative to explore innovative approaches and reforms that can enhance witness testimony in Nigerian courts.

One significant challenge in Nigeria's criminal justice system is the prevalence of cultural and societal pressures that may impact the willingness of witnesses to come forward and testify. Fear of reprisals, community stigma, and a lack of trust in the legal system are common deterrents. To mitigate these concerns, legal scholars advocate for the implementation of witness protection programs and measures to shield individuals providing testimony from potential harm. The establishment of a robust witness protection framework would not only encourage more witnesses to come forward but also contribute to a more accurate and reliable administration of justice.

Furthermore, leveraging technological advancements can significantly enhance the quality and presentation of witness testimony in Nigerian courts. The integration of video conferencing technology, for instance, can facilitate remote testimony, allowing witnesses to testify without the need to be physically present in the courtroom. This can be particularly beneficial in cases where the witness faces challenges in attending court proceedings due to geographical constraints or safety concerns. By embracing technology, Nigerian courts can streamline the testimony process, making it more accessible and efficient while maintaining the necessary safeguards for the adversarial system.

In addition to technological advancements, legal education and training programs for both legal professionals and the public can contribute to a more effective witness testimony process. Educating witnesses on their rights and the importance of their role in the justice system can empower them to participate more confidently in legal proceedings. Simultaneously, providing training for legal practitioners on effective questioning techniques and the psychological aspects of witness testimony can enhance the overall quality of the evidence presented in court. By investing in

educational initiatives, the Nigerian criminal justice system can foster a culture of collaboration and understanding between witnesses, legal professionals, and the broader community.

f. Supporting Victims in the Legal Process:

Victims of crime often face psychological trauma that can persist long after the criminal act has occurred. Forensic psychologists in Nigeria contribute to victim support by providing psychological assessments, counselling and expert testimony when necessary. The role of forensic and clinical psychologists extends beyond the courtroom, helping victims cope with the emotional and psychological aftermath of their experiences (Akintoye, 2020). In cases where victims are required to testify, forensic psychologists assist legal professionals in preparing them for the challenges of the courtroom environment. This support ensures that victims can provide accurate and coherent testimony, promoting a fair and just legal process. Moreover, by understanding the psychological impact of the crime on the victim, forensic psychologists contribute to sentencing recommendations that consider the rehabilitation and well-being of both the offender and the victim. Forensic psychology contributes to criminal investigations and the legal process in Nigeria by providing insights into criminal behaviour, witness testimony, and victim support. Ogunlesi and Akinlolu (2020) argue that the application of forensic psychology principles can enhance the quality of investigations, helping to ensure fair and just outcomes in criminal cases.

f. Mental Health and Criminal Justice:

The connection of mental health and the criminal justice system is a critical area where psychology plays a vital role. Studies indicate a disproportionately high prevalence of mental health disorders among individuals entangled in the criminal justice system (Fazel & Danesh, 2002). The walls of correctional facilities have become de facto asylums for those whose minds bear the scars of neglect, abuse, and societal indifference. In a study conducted by James et al. (2018), it was revealed that a substantial number of incarcerated individuals had prior encounters with mental health services, underscoring the inadequacy of early intervention and support. The cracks in the system become gaps through which individuals fall, trapped in a cycle where mental health struggles and criminality reinforce each other.

The repercussions of this nexus extend far beyond the prison walls. Families are torn asunder, communities are left grappling with the aftermath, and society at large bears the burden of unaddressed mental health issues cascading into criminal behaviour. The link between mental health and criminality is not merely an individual predicament but a societal malaise that necessitates a comprehensive and compassionate response. In the quest for justice, the mental health of those accused often takes a backseat. The adversarial nature of legal proceedings tends to overshadow the underlying mental health issues that may have played a pivotal role in the commission of a crime. A more enlightened approach would involve integrating mental health assessments into the legal framework, allowing for a holistic understanding of the individual standing before the bar of justice.

Research by Skeem et al. (2011) underscores the importance of such an approach, demonstrating that addressing mental health needs can contribute to reducing recidivism. A criminal justice system that recognizes and accommodates mental health concerns not only serves the interests of justice but also fulfills the broader societal goal of rehabilitation over punishment. Mark's journey through the criminal justice system serves as a microcosm of a larger dilemma. The stigma associated with mental health issues exacerbates the challenges faced by those within the legal quagmire. A society that stigmatizes mental health impedes both prevention and intervention, leaving individuals to grapple with their demons in isolation.

To break the shackles of this cycle, collaboration between the criminal justice and mental health systems is imperative. Mental health professionals must be integrated into legal proceedings, offering expert insights that can inform decisions related to sentencing, parole, and rehabilitation. Concurrently, legal professionals need to be educated about the intricate nuances of mental health, fostering an environment where empathy coexists with the pursuit of justice. In Nigeria, as in many other countries, individuals with mental health issues often come into contact with the criminal justice system. Ogunjumo and Aloba (2017) discuss the importance of mental health assessments, treatment, and support services within the criminal justice context to address the specific needs of this population.

g. Community Policing and Psychological Perspectives:

Community policing is gaining momentum as a proactive approach to crime prevention in Nigeria. Psychological principles underpin community policing strategies by fostering trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community. Research by Alemika and Odekunle (2018) suggests that community-oriented policing, informed by psychological insights, can contribute to crime reduction and improved public safety.

Community policing is more than a strategy; it is a philosophy that fosters a sense of shared responsibility for public safety. Drawing inspiration from sociological and psychological principles, it seeks to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the diverse communities they serve. In the words of Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990), pioneers in the field of community policing, it is "a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership between the police and the community." The psychological underpinnings of community policing lie in its acknowledgment of the nuanced nature of criminal behaviour. Traditional models often view crime as a detached entity, isolated from its sociocultural context. However, community policing integrates psychological perspectives by recognizing that crime is a product of complex interactions between individuals and their environments. Bandura's social learning theory (1977), for instance, becomes a lens through which law enforcement can understand the influence of community dynamics on criminal behaviour.

In practice, community policing manifests as departure from authoritarian approach to more relational and empathetic stance. Officers become community liaisons rather than mere enforcers of the law. This shift in roles is founded on psychological principles of building trust and rapport. Trust is the linchpin that holds together the delicate fabric of a community, and community policing understands this implicitly. The importance of trust is accentuated by the social contract theory, where individuals in a society willingly submit to the authority of law enforcement with the expectation of protection and justice (Rousseau, 1762). Community policing transforms this theoretical contract into a tangible relationship. Officers engage in dialogue with community members, attending town hall meetings, and participating in local events. Through these interactions, they become acquainted with the community's concerns and aspirations, fostering a sense of shared ownership in public safety.

Moreover, community policing aligns with the psychological concept of procedural justice. Tyler's research (1990) on procedural justice suggests that individuals are more likely to cooperate with authorities when they perceive the decision-making process as fair and respectful. Community policing, by involving the community in decision-making processes, enhances perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. This not only increases public cooperation but also reduces the likelihood of resistance or defiance against law enforcement. However, the successful implementation of community policing requires a paradigm shift not only among law enforcement but also within the communities themselves. Psychological theories of attitude change, such as the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), provide insights into how attitudes toward law enforcement can be transformed. Through sustained positive interactions, community members undergo a process of cognitive elaboration, reassessing their preconceived notions and stereotypes about law enforcement. The integration of community policing with psychological perspectives on criminal justice heralds a new era in law enforcement. It is a paradigm that recognizes the symbiotic relationship between communities and law enforcement, weaving together the intricate threads of trust, procedural justice, and attitude change. As we stand at the intersection of sociology and psychology, the philosophy of community policing beckons us to reimagine a criminal justice system that is not only effective but, more importantly, humane.

3. Psychological Training for Criminal Justice Professionals:

Ensuring that criminal justice professionals, including law enforcement officers and legal practitioners, receive adequate psychological training is crucial. Adebowale et al. (2021) argue for the incorporation of psychological education into the training curriculum for criminal justice professionals in Nigeria to enhance their understanding of human behaviour and improve decision-making processes. To comprehend the evolving role of psychology in Nigerian criminal justice administration, it is imperative to trace its historical roots. The integration of psychological concepts in criminal justice gained momentum in the mid-20th century. The shift from a punitive to a rehabilitative approach was mirrored in global efforts, and Nigeria was no exception. The understanding that criminal behaviour is often linked to

underlying psychological factors paved the way for a more nuanced and individualized approach to justice. In the corridors of criminal justice, where the delicate balance between order and justice teeters, the importance of psychological training for professionals becomes a guiding light. The very nature of the criminal justice system demands a nuanced understanding of human behaviour, cognition, and emotion. This necessitates a departure from traditional training models and an embrace of psychological insights to equip professionals with the tools needed to navigate the complex terrain they tread.

Psychological training for criminal justice professionals is not merely an augmentation; it is a fundamental transformation of the approach to law enforcement. As Zehr (1990) notes, "Criminal justice, at its core, deals with individuals—complex, sentient beings shaped by a myriad of factors." The recognition of this complexity underscores the need for a deep and comprehensive understanding of psychology in the training of professionals in the field. Foremost among the psychological domains crucial to the training of criminal justice professionals is the study of criminal behaviour. Incorporating principles from criminology and forensic psychology, training programs delve into the roots of criminality. Lombroso's (1876) theory of the born criminal and subsequent theories, such as the strain theory (Merton, 1938) and social learning theory (Akers & Burgess, 1966), become foundational in understanding the myriad factors contributing to criminal conduct. This knowledge not only aids in the apprehension of offenders but also informs strategies for crime prevention.

Beyond the realm of criminal behaviour, psychological training emphasizes the importance of interpersonal skills. Law enforcement is not a detached interaction; it is a constant negotiation of power, authority, and empathy. Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) provides insights into the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, guiding professionals in fostering positive interactions with diverse communities. This training in effective communication is crucial not only for resolving conflicts but also for building trust—a cornerstone of successful law enforcement (Tyler, 2006). The psychological training of criminal justice professionals extends its reach into the domain of decision-making. The pressures inherent in the field often demand split-second judgments that carry profound consequences. Here, the dual-process model of decision-making (Kahneman, 2011) becomes a guiding principle. By understanding the interplay between intuitive and deliberative thinking, professionals are better equipped to navigate high-stakes situations with a balance of intuition and reasoned analysis. Moreover, the training of criminal justice professionals incorporates elements of psychological resilience. The field often exposes individuals to trauma, stress, and moral dilemmas. Concepts from positive psychology, such as grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007), become instrumental in cultivating the mental fortitude needed to withstand the challenges inherent in the profession. Resilience training ensures that professionals not only endure the strains of their work but emerge stronger and more capable. The infusion of psychological training into criminal justice education also sparks a paradigm shift in understanding the role of rehabilitation. Drawing on theories of behaviour change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), professionals learn to approach offenders with a rehabilitative mindset. This shift is not merely about punishment but about understanding the underlying motivations and addressing them to prevent reoffending—a realization that aligns with contemporary notions of restorative justice (Zehr, 2015).

4. Discussions

Psychological assessments are indispensable tools in comprehending and evaluating offenders at every stage of the criminal justice process in Nigeria. Okorie's research (2018) highlights the significance of culturally sensitive assessments, underscoring the need to consider unique cultural nuances. This emphasis ensures a holistic understanding of an individual's psychological makeup, facilitating informed decision-making and culturally appropriate interventions. By integrating psychological assessments into the criminal justice system, policymakers and practitioners can make more informed decisions, acknowledging the diversity of experiences that influence criminal behaviour.

Within the correctional system, psychology plays a pivotal role in rehabilitation, addressing challenges such as overcrowding and insufficient resources in Nigerian prisons. Psychological interventions, especially cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), tailored to specific needs, contribute significantly to reducing recidivism rates and improving mental health outcomes. The collaboration between psychologists and correctional staff is crucial for implementing

cost-effective interventions. By incorporating psychological principles into rehabilitation strategies, the criminal justice system in Nigeria can enhance the effectiveness of its efforts in transforming offenders into productive members of society. Forensic psychology significantly contributes to criminal investigations, witness testimony, and victim support in Nigeria. Forensic psychologists, through psychological profiling, enhance the understanding of criminal behaviour, ensuring more reliable witness testimonies and providing crucial support to victims. The application of psychological principles in criminal investigations not only aids in solving cases but also ensures fair and just outcomes. By acknowledging the role of forensic psychology, the Nigerian criminal justice system can strengthen its ability to deliver justice while upholding the rights and well-being of all involved parties. Mental health issues are intricately linked with the criminal justice system, necessitating a comprehensive and compassionate response. The high prevalence of mental health disorders among incarcerated individuals underscores the urgency of early intervention and support. Integrating mental health assessments into the legal framework can contribute significantly to reducing recidivism, aligning with societal goals of rehabilitation over punishment. By recognizing and addressing the mental health needs of those within the criminal justice system, Nigeria can move towards a more humane and effective approach to dealing with offenders. In the context of community policing, psychological insights play a crucial role in contributing to crime reduction and improved public safety in Nigeria. Community policing, grounded in psychological concepts such as procedural justice and attitude change, recognizes the nuanced nature of criminal behaviour. This approach fosters trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community, creating a more responsive and engaged society. By incorporating psychological perspectives into community policing strategies, Nigeria can build a safer and more resilient society. Adequate psychological training for criminal justice professionals is indispensable for understanding human behaviour and improving decision-making processes. This training encompasses the study of criminal behaviour, interpersonal skills, decision-making processes, and resilience. It transforms the approach to law enforcement, fostering a more empathetic and informed criminal justice system. By prioritizing psychological training for professionals within the criminal justice system, Nigeria can ensure a more effective and ethical response to the complex challenges posed by criminal behaviour.

The role of psychological assessments within the criminal justice process in Nigeria cannot be overstated. Okorie's (2018) research underscores the critical importance of culturally sensitive assessments, emphasizing the need to consider unique cultural nuances. This emphasis ensures a holistic understanding of an individual's psychological makeup, facilitating informed decision-making and culturally appropriate interventions. Integrating psychological assessments into the criminal justice system allows policymakers and practitioners to make more informed decisions, taking into account the diversity of experiences that influence criminal behaviour. Moving within the correctional system, psychology assumes a pivotal role in rehabilitation, particularly in addressing challenges such as overcrowding and insufficient resources in Nigerian prisons. The application of psychological interventions, especially cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), tailored to specific needs, significantly contributes to reducing recidivism rates and improving mental health outcomes. The collaboration between psychologists and correctional staff is crucial for implementing cost-effective interventions that can transform offenders into productive members of society. By incorporating psychological principles into rehabilitation strategies, the criminal justice system in Nigeria can enhance the effectiveness of its efforts.

Forensic psychology also plays a significant role in criminal investigations, witness testimony, and victim support in Nigeria. Through psychological profiling, forensic psychologists enhance the understanding of criminal behaviour, ensuring more reliable witness testimonies and providing crucial support to victims. The application of psychological principles in criminal investigations not only aids in solving cases but also ensures fair and just outcomes. Acknowledging the role of forensic psychology strengthens the Nigerian criminal justice system's ability to deliver justice while upholding the rights and well-being of all involved parties.

Mental health issues are intricately linked with the criminal justice system, necessitating a comprehensive and compassionate response. The high prevalence of mental health disorders among incarcerated individuals underscores the urgency of early intervention and support. Integrating mental health assessments into the legal framework can contribute significantly to reducing recidivism, aligning with societal goals of rehabilitation over punishment. By recognizing and addressing the mental health needs of those within the criminal justice system, Nigeria can move towards a more humane and effective approach to dealing with offenders. In the context of community policing,

psychological insights play a crucial role in contributing to crime reduction and improved public safety in Nigeria. Community policing, grounded in psychological concepts such as procedural justice and attitude change, recognizes the nuanced nature of criminal behaviour. This approach fosters trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community, creating a more responsive and engaged society. By incorporating psychological perspectives into community policing strategies, Nigeria can build a safer and more resilient society. Adequate psychological training for criminal justice professionals is indispensable for understanding human behaviour and improving decision-making processes. This training encompasses the study of criminal behaviour, interpersonal skills, decision-making processes, and resilience. It transforms the approach to law enforcement, fostering a more empathetic and informed criminal justice system. By prioritizing psychological training for professionals within the criminal justice system, Nigeria can ensure a more effective and ethical response to the complex challenges posed by criminal behaviour. In conclusion, the integration of psychological assessments and interventions at various stages of the criminal justice process in Nigeria is not merely beneficial but essential for fostering a system that is just, rehabilitative, and culturally sensitive.

5. Future Directions

As we peer into the future of the Nigerian criminal justice system, the horizon is marked by immense possibilities for the integration of psychology. The synergy between academic institutions, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations holds the key to unlocking ground breaking advancements in research, policy development, and the implementation of evidence-based practices. By fostering increased collaboration among these entities, Nigeria has the potential to forge a more effective and humane criminal justice system.

One of the pivotal areas for growth lies in the collaborative efforts of academic institutions. Universities and research centers can play a pivotal role in conducting studies that shed light on the intricacies of criminal behaviour, rehabilitation strategies, and the mental health implications within the Nigerian context. Establishing interdisciplinary research teams comprising psychologists, criminologists, legal scholars, and sociologists can facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the issues at the intersection of psychology and the criminal justice system. Furthermore, the collaboration can extend to government agencies responsible for shaping and implementing policies. By involving policymakers in the dialogue, researchers can directly contribute to the development of informed and progressive policies. Such policies can incorporate psychological insights into criminal investigations, court proceedings, and correctional practices. For Bonta and Andrews (2016) stated that understanding the psychological factors that contribute to criminal behaviour can inform preventive measures and interventions that address the root causes of criminality.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can serve as crucial intermediaries, bridging the gap between academia and government. These organizations can advocate for evidence-based practices, raise awareness about the importance of psychological perspectives in the criminal justice system, and offer support for the implementation of reforms (Freiberg & Carson, 2010). Collaborative initiatives between NGOs, academic institutions, and government agencies can create a powerful triad working towards a more just and psychologically informed criminal justice system. Forensic psychology, with its emphasis on applying psychological principles to legal issues, presents a particularly promising avenue for development. Advancements in forensic psychology can revolutionize criminal investigations and court proceedings by providing insights into witness reliability, offender profiling, and the evaluation of mental states.

Moreover, the expansion of mental health services within the criminal justice system is an essential facet of future development. DeMichele et al. (2019) opined that integrating mental health professionals into various stages of the criminal justice process, from pre-trial assessments to post-conviction rehabilitation, can significantly enhance judicial outcomes. By identifying and addressing mental health issues early in the criminal justice continuum, interventions can be tailored to promote rehabilitation and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. To realize these ambitious goals, (Mueser, Silverstein, & Farkas, 2013) observed that investment in training programs for professionals in both psychology and criminal justice is imperative. Freeman, Felgoise, and Davis (2008) proposes that, developing a cadre of experts well-versed in the areas of forensic psychology, clinical assessments, and therapeutic interventions can elevate the standard of care within the criminal justice system. Training initiatives should encompass law enforcement officers, legal professionals, and correctional staff, fostering a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to

addressing the complex interplay of psychological factors within the realm of criminal justice. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns can play a pivotal role in garnering support for these integrative efforts. By educating the public about the benefits of incorporating psychology into the criminal justice system, a broader understanding and acceptance of these approaches can be cultivated. This, in turn, can lead to increased public demand for policies that prioritize evidence-based practices and psychological considerations in the pursuit of justice.

6. Conclusion

System can shift from a punitive approach to one that is centered on individual transformation and societal well-being. Collaborative initiatives between academic institutions, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations can play a pivotal role in advancing this transformative agenda. The combination of psychology with the criminal justice system in Nigeria promises a paradigm shift. The synergy between academic research, governmental policies, and the efforts of non-governmental organizations creates a comprehensive framework for addressing the intricate challenges posed by criminal behavior. This holistic approach recognizes that crime is often a manifestation of underlying psychological issues that necessitate understanding and targeted interventions. Forensic psychology, as an evolving discipline, adds a crucial dimension to this transformative journey. Advancements in forensic techniques and the incorporation of psychological principles enhance the accuracy of investigations and legal proceedings. This not only ensures a more reliable justice system but also contributes to building public trust in the efficacy and fairness of the legal processes. Expanding mental health services further reinforces the commitment to a rehabilitative approach. By providing necessary support and treatment for individuals within the criminal justice system, there is a greater potential for breaking the cycle of criminal behavior. This not only benefits the offenders but also contributes to the overall safety and well-being of the society they reintegrate into.

In the realm of law enforcement, a psychological perspective reshapes strategies from reactive measures to proactive, preventive approaches. Understanding the motivations and triggers behind criminal acts allows for the development of targeted strategies, ultimately reducing the occurrence of crime. This proactive stance not only enhances public safety but also reduces the burden on the criminal justice system by preventing criminal behavior before it happens. Within the judiciary, the infusion of psychological insights brings about a more informed and empathetic approach to sentencing. Judges armed with a nuanced understanding of the psychological factors at play can tailor sentences that address the root causes of criminal conduct. This not only promotes a sense of justice but also opens avenues for rehabilitation and reintegration. Ultimately, the integration of psychology into the Nigerian criminal justice system represents a progressive and enlightened path forward. It is a journey that transcends mere punishment, aiming instead for a society where understanding, rehabilitation, and individual growth form the core principles of the justice system. As the nation embraces this transformative role of psychology, it positions itself at the forefront of a more compassionate and effective approach to addressing the complex issues of criminality.

Recommendation

Recommendation for policy initiatives:

The incorporation of psychology into the criminal justice system necessitates a re-evaluation and development of policies to reflect a more innovative and rehabilitative approach. Policies should be crafted to encourage collaboration between academic institutions, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Establishing frameworks that promote interdisciplinary research and the exchange of knowledge can foster a comprehensive understanding of criminal behavior and inform evidence-based policy decisions. Moreover, policy initiatives should prioritize the integration of mental health services within the criminal justice system. Adequate funding and resources must be allocated to support the expansion of mental health programs, ensuring that psychological rehabilitation becomes a central component of the justice system. Policies that incentivize the training of law enforcement officers and legal professionals in psychological principles can further enhance the effectiveness of the whole judicial system. Addressing the socio-economic factors that contribute to criminality should also be a key focus of policy development. By

acknowledging the interconnectedness of psychological well-being and criminal behavior, policies can be designed to create a more equitable society, thereby reducing the root causes of crime.

Recommendations for Research Implications:

The article highlights the essential role of research in advancing the integration of psychology into the Nigerian criminal justice system. Research endeavours should aim to deepen our understanding of the psychological factors contributing to criminal behavior within the local context. This involves investigating cultural differences, socio-economic influences, and individual experiences that shape criminal conduct. Forensic and clinical psychology research becomes crucial in refining investigative techniques and legal proceedings. Advancements in this field can contribute to the development of more accurate and reliable methods, ensuring the integrity of the criminal justice process. Research initiatives should also explore the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and identify best practices for reducing recidivism. Interdisciplinary research collaborations between psychologists, criminologists, legal scholars, and social scientists should be encouraged. Such collaborations can generate comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of criminal behavior and inform the development of holistic interventions. Additionally, longitudinal studies can track the outcomes of rehabilitative efforts, providing valuable data for refining and optimizing psychological interventions within the criminal justice system.

Recommendations for Practice:

The implications for practice are perhaps the most tangible and immediate. Law enforcement agencies, legal professionals, and rehabilitation practitioners need to incorporate psychological principles into their day-to-day operations. Training programs for law enforcement officers should include modules on understanding the psychological underpinnings of criminal behavior. This knowledge equips officers with the tools to approach investigations and interactions with a more informed and empathetic perspective. This not only enhances the quality of law enforcement but also contributes to building trust between the police force and the communities they serve. In the judicial sphere, the integration of psychological assessments in court proceedings becomes a standard practice. Judges and legal professionals should be trained to interpret and apply psychological insights in sentencing decisions. This ensures a more individualized and rehabilitative approach to justice, recognizing the potential for personal growth and transformation. Rehabilitation practitioners, including psychologists and mental health professionals, play a central role in the successful reintegration of offenders into society. Tailoring rehabilitation programs to address specific psychological issues identified through assessments is essential. Programs should not only focus on punishment but also emphasize therapeutic interventions that target the root causes of criminal behavior.

7. Challenges and Considerations:

While the implications discussed are promising, it is crucial to acknowledge potential challenges and considerations in implementing these changes. One significant challenge is the need for a paradigm shift in societal attitudes towards crime and punishment. The public may need to be educated on the benefits of a rehabilitative approach and the role of psychology in fostering positive change. Resource constraints could pose a barrier to the effective implementation of policies and practices informed by psychology. Adequate funding for mental health services, training programs, and research initiatives is essential for sustained progress. Advocacy for increased financial support from governmental and non-governmental sources is paramount. Cultural sensitivity is another consideration. Psychological principles must be applied with an understanding of the cultural context to ensure that interventions are relevant and effective. Collaboration with local communities and stakeholders is vital in tailoring policies and practices to the specific needs of the Nigerian population.

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